

is so incredibly stupid that for many long years, while men in high authority in the German Empire, ministers, generals, and professors, expounded that doctrine at great length and with perfect clearness, hardly any one could be found in England to take it seriously, or to regard it as anything but the vapourings of a crazy sect. England knows better now; the scream of the guns has awakened her. The German doctrine is to be put to the proof. Who dares to say what the result will be? To predict certain failure to the German arms is only a kind of boasting. Yet there are guarded beliefs which a modest man is free to hold till they are seen to be groundless. The Germans have taken Antwerp; they may possibly destroy the British fleet, overrun England and France, repel Russia, establish themselves as the dictators of Europe—in short, fulfil their dreams. What then? At an immense cost of human suffering they will have achieved, as it seems to us, a colossal and agonizing failure. Their engines of destruction will never serve them to create anything so fair as the civilization of France. Their uneasy jealousy and self-assertion is a miserable substitute for the old laws of chivalry and regard for the weak, which they have renounced and forgotten. The will and high permission of all-ruling Heaven may leave them at large for a time, to seek evil to others. When they have finished with it, the world will have to be remade.

We cannot be sure that the Ruler of the world will forbid this. We cannot even be sure that the destroyers, in the peace that their destruction will procure for them, may not themselves learn to rebuild. The Goths, who destroyed the fabric of the Roman Empire, gave their name, in time, to the greatest mediaeval art.