

GERMANY AND GERMANS

THOSE who have lived with Germans at home or in England in friendship so close that the difference of race was not always present to the consciousness, have had the advantage of seeing the idea of the German Empire not on its defence, but expressing itself as an understood thing. It is said that to understand a religion one should not read the books written to defend or to attack it, but should listen to its uncontroversial utterances addressed to believers whose faith is taken for granted. So also in matters of national feeling more is learnt from careless, spontaneous allusions than from reasoned statements.

It is true that in this unhappy but perhaps inevitable war we feel that we are attacking an immoral and unscrupulous militarism, set forth and embodied in practice with true Teutonic thoroughness by academic and political authorities; but the men who are fighting against us feel quite differently. The strength of the enemy lies in the fact that the average German soldier, who probably has never heard of Bernhardi, Treitschke, and Nietzsche, honestly believes that we are unwarrantably threatening the existence of the German Empire which it is his duty and his glory to defend with his life. The poignancy of this tragic situation arises from the sincerity and nobility of the feelings ranged against us, but in them lies also the hope of the future and the possibility, even in these present sorrowful days, of fulfilling the Christian duty of loving our enemies. It is true that the passion of