

The doctrine that Might is Right, though it is true, is an unprofitable doctrine, for it is true only in so broad and simple a sense that no one would dream of denying it. If a single nation can conquer, depress, and destroy all the other nations of the earth and acquire for itself a sole dominion, there may be matter for question whether God approves that dominion; what is certain is that He permits it. No earthly governor who is conscious of his power will waste time in listening to arguments concerning what his power ought to be. His right to wield the sword can be challenged only by the sword. An all-powerful governor who feared no assault would never trouble himself to assert that Might is Right. He would smile and sit still. The doctrine, when it is propounded by weak humanity, is never a statement of abstract truth; it is a declaration of intention, a threat, a boast, an advertisement. It has no value except when there is some one to be frightened. But it is a very dangerous doctrine when it becomes the creed of a stupid people, for it flatters their self-sufficiency, and distracts their attention from the difficult, subtle, frail, and wavering conditions of human power. The tragic question for Germany to-day is what she can do, not whether it is right for her to do it. The buffaloes, it must be allowed, had a perfect right to dominate the prairie of America, till the hunters came. They moved in herds, they practised shock-tactics, they were violent, and very cunning. There are but few of them now. A nation of men who mistake violence for strength, and cunning for wisdom, may conceivably suffer the fate of the buffaloes, and perish without knowing why.

To the English mind the German political doctrine