

0511

P42

1914

100

P42

came so suddenly that there was no time even for a quiet talk.

Only a few weeks before the outbreak of the war, a brilliant celebration was held in the little university town of Groningen, in Holland, where many British marines and other prisoners are now interned. It was a really international gathering, of a kind that will be very rare indeed for many years to come. Representatives were gathered together from most of the great universities of the world. In their presence, and in the hearing also of Queen Wilhelmina, the "Rector Magnificus" reminded us of how his university had been founded to take up the work of Louvain and Tournay, in the days when, three hundred years ago, the Dutch provinces were wrestling with the power of Spain for an independent national existence and for liberty of conscience. How little did we think, in those piping days of peace, that within a few short weeks the neighbouring country of Belgium would be overrun by an even more ruthless conqueror; and that the head of a world-famous German university, whose hand we clasped in cordial friendship, would now be handing out honorary degrees to two leading representatives of the Krupp works at Essen, in recognition of their diabolical preëminence in the forging of death-dealing weapons of war!

One never can tell, in the life of a nation any more than in private life, what would have happened if a different course had been pursued. The other side holds that if England had meant war she should have said so at once. One reason for the insensate hatred by which we are assailed to-day is that we are alleged to have waited craftily until Germany had become embroiled with both France and Russia before jumping in as a make-weight against her. Germany sincerely believed that, sooner or later, war with Russia (whom she really feared) was inevitable. For a time she seems to have hoped that she might have Russia alone to deal with, and she looked to England to keep France quiet. It was only after France too had accepted her challenge that we decided to go in against her, so as to turn the balance.