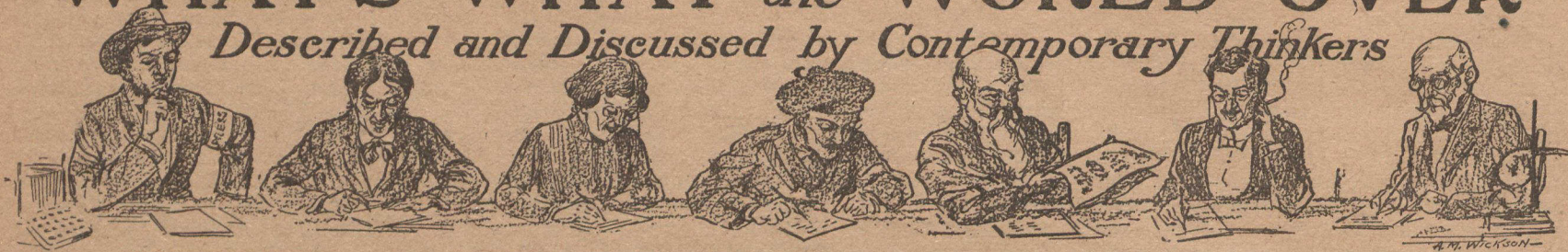


WHAT'S WHAT *the* WORLD OVER

Described and Discussed by Contemporary Thinkers



G. B. S TALKS OF PEACE

The Insuppressible Shaw Aims His Views on a Chesterton Book

UNDER the heading (chosen by himself) "British Squealing and the Situation After the War," George Bernard Shaw contributes to the New Republic a sermon on "squealing" disguised as a review of Cecil Chesterton's book, "The Perils of Peace." Striking paragraphs from the article are here quoted:

There are two main facts to be grasped before any sensible criticism of the war can be delivered. The first is that the judgment of international relations by the ordinary morality of personal intercourse between fellow citizens in peace is as idle as taking the temperature of molten steel by a common bath thermometer. "The doctrine that great nations live only by aggression and expansion" may be called into question as between great nations and God; but to call it into question as between the British Empire, the French Republic, the Russian Empire, and the Central Empires is mere mud-slinging. The British nation has expanded by sheer aggression and extermination over North America, Australia, at least half the available part of Africa, and the whole of Egypt and India, whilst Germany is still clamoring for a place in the sun. The cry of "World power or downfall," as applied to the only form of physical domination that is practicable as world power, that is, command of the sea, is a British cry. Bernhardi's contention that Prussia must destroy the power of England or lose her own is exactly balanced by Mr. Cecil Chesterton's contention that England must destroy the power of Prussia or lose her own. We may say to Prussia, like the Shakespearian warrior, "For one or both of us the hour is come"; but we must not make ourselves ridiculous by claiming moral superiority to a line of conduct of which we have never ceased to boast that we set the example to the world. Mr. Chesterton himself, when he turns from abusing the Prussians to attacking the government, throws it in the teeth of our Cabinet ministers that they are not "bloody, bold, and resolute," crafty and unscrupulous, acquisitive and domineering in the old oligarchic fashion; and here I think he does the national spirit and instinct an injustice (however the nation's very inadequate mouthpieces may deserve his scorn); for never has the British Lion made so terrible a spring or chosen his moment and cut off the retreat of his prey with such consummate luck and cunning, as in this matter of striking down his German rival. Just consider it! Germany, placed morally in the wrong by her own initiative; Germany, hemmed in and besieged and blockaded by all the formidable Christian Powers of Europe; Germany, lured to attack whilst her navy was still incomplete and her alliances still unachieved; Germany, at such a discount that Italy deserts her, Rumania attacks her, and Viscount Grey is at least in a position to bully Sweden: is not all this a theme for the trumpet rather than the harmonium, for the shouting triumphant warrior rather than for the hypocrite concealing his copy of Machiavelli in the binding of a hymnbook? The Lion's Ambush will long be remembered as the culminating feat of the war like old England in the mastery of the warlike old world; and the epitaph of the warlike old Prussian will be, "She met her match in England."

From the things that Mr. Chesterton must not say let us turn to the facts that he must face. First, the fact that nothing has happened in this war as yet that should make any man who knows what war means turn a hair. Atrocities in Belgium, pogroms in Galicia, Lusitania sinkings, bombs falling like the rain on the just and on the unjust, the old and the young, the male and the female, Lille deportations, shootings of Nurse Cavell and Captain Fryatt and Sheehy Skeffington and the Baralong crew, the Wittenburg funk and the Ruhleben food, starvation blockades, violations of neutrality and tearing up of scraps of paper, poison gas and liquid fire and Juggernaut

tanks: none of these raise any new moral question nor throw any new light on what human nature is capable of or on what war involves. If you go to war, you engage yourself not only to fight, but not to squeal. The Germans are out to shake our nerves; and the symptom of such shaking is squealing.

The other fact to be faced is that non-German Europe is not going to spend the remainder of the duration of this planet sitting on Germany's head. A head with the brains of sixty millions of people in it takes more sitting on than we shall have time for. What we really ought to consider is what is to become of the Alliance when the pressure under which it was rivetted is removed. That pressure was the fear of Germany ("Fear is the mainspring of war"); and we have already shown that the German terror was a scarecrow. Nobody now supposes that Ger-



The brilliant, irreconcilable G. B. S., sometimes more erratic than Harden, sometimes more sensible than John Bull himself.

many can steamroll Europe, or that it was ever worth her while to try. The day after the peace we shall be more afraid of Russia than of Germany; and all Europe will be more afraid of us than of any other single Power. France will for the first time have a very keen sense that we cannot afford to quarrel with her, and that her fleet, which counted for something in our command of the sea, hitherto eclipsed by the military German bugaboo, will shine out before the world as a menace to the rest of the world of precisely the same character as the German army was two years ago. Our victory, or at worst our demonstration that a German victory is impossible, will knock the linchpin out of the Allied appercart and the strained embrace in which the Tommy, the Poilu, and the Cossack are now enlaced will relax with a very perceptible lowering of the temperature of the three pairs of shoulders. The French tariffs will gall whilst the French navy grows; and the rugged Russian bear will, from his new vantage grounds of Persia and Poland and Constantinople, overshadow regions which, within my lifetime and even Mr. Chesterton's we would have fought for to our last penny sooner than have left them under Russia's influence or that of Japan, much less of the two in alliance. I was ridiculed in my youth for saying that the Balance of Power was still as live an issue as ever. Well, nobody ridicules me for uttering that platitude now;

yet some of us imagine that we can suddenly take the enormous weight of Germany out of the scales and replace it by a burning feather without bringing down the opposite scale with a crash that may jerk half the weights out of it. Our transient rages and spite and quarrellings and vendettas have no place in the diplomacy of such balancings. They are useful only as whisky is useful to a soldier who runs short of British pluck and has to eke it out with Dutch courage. Still less have they any place in the diplomacy which alone can supersede the diplomacy of military power-balancing. Supernational law, when it comes, will not be a respecter of nations; nor will it act on Mr. Cecil Chesterton's proposal to establish a class of feeble-minded professional-criminal nations with curtailed rights as an excuse for plundering and disabling Germany.

Failing the establishment of supernational law, the Powers will have to fall back on alliances as before; for the days of single combat between the great Powers are over. And in the bidding for allies the balance of power will more and more lie with the United States, because they now form the only single political unit of the first magnitude that is completely self-sufficient. England will want an alliance with America; and Germany will have to choose between the west and the east. It will be vital to England's interest that Germany should not choose the east; and the only way to prevent her will be to let her into a western alliance. Now the exclusion of France from an Anglo-German-American combination would suit neither France nor the combination; and thus we may get what we should have played for all along: an irresistible magnetic nucleus for western civilization consisting of an allied France, Germany, Britain, and North America. Such a combination would almost instantly accrete the Netherlands and Scandinavia. As compared to it a combination of Japan, Russia, Italy, France and England is a desperate and unnatural adventure in wanton heterogeneity; and nothing but the sense of an overwhelming danger from Germany keeps it together to-day. Mr. Cecil Chesterton, in clamouring for the utter destruction of that danger, is also clamouring for the inevitable break-up of the combination it has called into being and held together. The more he studies the combinations that are likely to succeed it, the more he will appreciate the wisdom of the old political precept, "Treat your friend as one who may some day be your enemy, and your enemy as one who may some day be your friend."

THE GERMAN CHILD

Has a Miserable Time of It Since His Country is at War

MR. D. THOMAS CURTIN, of Boston, who is delivering a series of lectures in England on "Ten Months in Germany," furnishes us with an illuminating picture of German Child Life.

The old German Hausfrau of the three K's—which I will roughly translate by "Kids, Kitchen, and Kirk"—has become even more a servant of the master of the house than she was. The State has taken control of the souls of her children and she has not even that authority that she had twenty years ago. The father has become even more important than of yore. The natural tendency of a nation of which almost every man is a soldier is to elevate the man at the expense of the woman, and the German woman has taken to her new position very readily.

At four years of age the German male child begins to be a soldier. At six he is accustomed to walk in military formation. This system has a few advantages, but many disadvantages. A great course of infants can, for example, be marshalled through the streets of a great city without any trouble at all. But that useful discipline is more than counterbalanced by the killing of individuality. German children, especially during the war, try to grow up to be little men and women as quickly as pos-