

POOR PRINT
Epreuve illisible

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the articles of reputable writers, the comments of unbiased English observers who visit France. I present this summary to my readers in the intention I have already stated: as a warning. It is vital that public opinion in this country should be acquainted, from the very outset of the war, with the inflexible aim of France, and check its chronic propensity to wander off among incoherent visions which the French cannot comprehend and that are becoming a source of perplexity, and of some irritation, to them. Identity of purpose with France is even more essential than political and economic co-operation, *for the plain truth is that the winning of this war depends more on France than on England*, since it is France, not England, who is being incessantly and ardently adjured by Germany to make a separate peace. There is a possibility of disgruntling the French by indulging overmuch in the speculations about peace aims which are beginning to be current in England—and it is a possibility that contains grave eventual dangers.

Do the English seriously suppose that France, who has five million men under arms; several million women struggling single-handed to raise their families, keep up trade, dig and sow the fields; a national economy infinitely more disrupted than England's; individual financial difficulties and emotional stresses incomparably more numerous (for everybody in France, not only a part of the population, is shatteringly affected by the mobilization), is going to ask from this war—and obtain—*anything short of complete physical security?* I repeat that she will insist upon, and carry out, whatever the method, such guarantees as will make a fourth aggression of Germany literally impossible. Impossible for good. Assuredly I do not say that the French reject the notion of a European Federation, but they are not making it a fetish as the English tend to do. Oh! Can nobody, can nothing, I wonder, prevent the English from striving perpetually to escape reality by taking refuge in sloppy-mindedness, a bathetic sentimentality, a maudlin Utopianism! Can they never foresee the ineluctable and cope with facts in time? Here they are again at their old tricks of mawkish and befuddled pity, of senseless wishful-thinking, exactly as when they grieved over Germany in 1918, blamed her self-made misfortunes on the Treaty of Versailles, sponsored the wickedly mischievous thesis that the latter (which freed some four-fifths of the oppressed minorities of Europe) was the most iniquitous machination of modern times, and discovered a spiritual affinity and kinship—eagerly exploited by the Germans, of course—with a nation of bullies, boasters, and slaves!

Often I ask myself whether there exists, in the world today, a people as naturally good as the English, and as immeasurably stupid. I honestly believe there isn't—and I also believe that this same calamitous combination of goodness and stupidity is principally responsible for the mistakes committed since 1936 (the fatal year of the German re-occupation of the Rhineland, a move that England persuaded France to accept, and that made this war unavoidable), and of which we are now reaping the deadly harvest.

My prayer, therefore, to whatever democratic gods there be, is that the English may continue to be good, but should stop being stupid, and make a start in this much-to-be-lauded direction by looking the obvious, the factual, the inevitable in the face—and, instead of just resisting, at the very last minute, the catastrophes they call down upon themselves (and others) by their lazily optimistic, deliberate blindness, think out the future realistically, and not abstractedly in the vaguest and loosest of rambling verbal dreams. For the sake of the entire world, I urge them not to moon about trifling with those ineffectual arabesques they like to dub their peace aims, and for which, until more concrete plans can be made, the French, very rightly, have not the faintest use.

ODETTE KEUN