

THE WAR AND ITS ORIGIN

OUR absorption in the incidents and our concern over the issue of the tragic drama which is now being enacted in Europe tend to lessen our interest in the causes, direct and indirect, that brought about the war. And even with the evidence now before us a complete history cannot yet be written. Disclosures have still to be made, and it may well be that fifty years hence memoirs of some of the chief personages will see the light from which the world will learn interesting and important facts that now lie hid from view. But it is none the less incumbent on each and all of us to be able to give, according to our lights, a reason for the faith that is in us. We have not been suffering, on the British side at least, from any megalomania or war fever, nor have we acted on unreasoning impulse. With us it is not a case of "my country, right or wrong." But we are fortunate, all the same, in feeling that nothing could have happened that was better calculated to bind together so instantaneously and so effectively the somewhat ill-compacted fabric of our Empire. Certain negligible incidents in South Africa have not marred the picture: they have only set it in a stronger light. Is it possible, then, that the unanimity which has inspired our action can leave room for anything to be said on the other side?

Of course there always is another side. We are quite accustomed, in private life, to find two sane, sober, and sensible persons differing materially in the view they take of the same set of facts and phenomena. And when children quarrel, we sometimes see them rushing at each other so impetuously that both tact and strength are needed to pull them away and calm their surging spirits. For the time being they have lost their heads. That is what has happened to the nations of Europe—in more senses than one! It all