

the influences which mould the thought of the people have continuously proclaimed that war, especially war with our Empire, was a stern and inevitable duty. Their ruling classes constitute a military autocracy, and the military caste with its all-commanding authority was bent on war. Beyond question, there were influences in Germany which made for peace and favoured peaceful development; but those forces apparently lacked organization and leadership. Moreover, there has been evident in Germany during the past quarter of a century a rising spirit of democracy which has brought inquietude to the ruling oligarchy and to those who are devoted to the principles of absolutism. There was great confidence that a successful war would be a powerful factor in checking or quelling that spirit.

Between the Prussian autocracy and its ideal of world-wide dominance, British supremacy upon the sea has stood as a barrier which must disappear if the ideal was to be attained; and so it was proclaimed that Germany's future was on the sea. We are only beginning to realize the enormous military strength of the German Empire. We are only commencing to understand how immensely superior she stood in military organization, preparation and resources to all the other nations at the outbreak of war. Wielding that tremendous power, which made any apprehension of attack by our Empire a mere idle dream, Germany has for at least twenty years, with constantly increasing emphasis, pressed her challenge of the seas upon the British Empire. Germany well knew, as Britain knew, what that challenge meant and what would ensue from the failure to accept it. We had either to admit our inability to guard adequately the pathways of the Empire and thus retire ingloriously from the contest forced mercilessly upon us, or we had to make good the Empire's right to exist; and that meant the supremacy of our naval forces against any attack that might reasonably be apprehended. Thus the contest in naval armaments, which British statesmen have vainly endeavoured to prevent, has proceeded from year to year. No shot was fired, no ships were sunk, no battle was fought; but it was, in truth, war between the two nations. International issues are often determined otherwise than by actual hostilities; and Great Britain realized that when her power upon the seas could be successfully challenged by Germany the day of her departure was at hand and indeed had already arrived.

On three recognized occasions during the past ten years Germany has brought Europe to the verge of actual war. On two of these occasions she imposed her will upon Europe, but on the third Great Britain stood firmly resolute and Germany receded.