

SOME PROGNOSTICATIONS AND A PREFACE

heard an innocent-faced young Scotsman boasting to a fellow-soldier, amid roars of laughter, that he had bayoneted a disarmed German who knelt before him imploring mercy."

What the Germans on their side have done we know from Lord Bryce's Report. But if there is any truth in the appeal of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, our officials during a riot in Ceylon have behaved like the Germans in Belgium, if happily only on a small scale. As for their doings in Ireland——!

IX.

The Dutch, when a flood is impending, appoint in all threatened areas a local *dijkgraaf*, or dyke-reeve, with full military rights over the polder-land, to take whatever measures are necessary for its salvation. Where are our dyke-reeves before the *Watersnood* now fast reducing Europe to a spiritual swamp? They are not to be found in the Cabinets, for the statesman—Lord Haldane has told us frankly, though I cannot find it in Hegel—must follow, not lead, public opinion. The politician and the public can in fact only advance, like two drunken men, by leaning on each other. Nor does the Press—that reflex of the advertiser and the reader—afford an escape from this vicious circle. The Stage is even more swiftly at the mercy of the mob, drawing still more costly breath. The Church—well, after all, *vox populi vox dei* is a theological proposition.

There indeed remain a few personalities—in the Lords, the Commons, the Press, even the Church—that have not bowed the knee to Baal. But even journalists who do not pander to the public and its idols have been so disequibrated by the war that I have, on entering Fleet Street by what remains of Temple Bar, sometimes looked up expecting to see the inscription "Abandon sense all ye who enter here." Followed perhaps by "For three years or the duration of the war."

In this general neglect of the dykes at a time when the danger from their neglect is at a maximum, I am impelled to present myself at the post of national duty as a dyke-custodian, a trustee of civilization—self-appointed.

X.

But even a self-appointed functionary may tender his credentials and I respectfully beg to offer, in proof of my qualifications for