

## 2 MY YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR

Incidentally, the whole training of his profession is to try to prevent war. He does try to prevent it; so does every right-minded man. It is a horror and a scourge, to be avoided as you would avoid leprosy. When it does come, the diplomatist's business is to place all the blame for it with the enemy.

One must go many years back of the dates of the State papers to find the cause of the Great War. He must go into the hearts of the people who are fighting, into their aims and ambitions, which diplomatists make plausible according to international law. More illuminating than the pamphlets embracing an exchange of despatches was the remark of a practical German: "Von Bethmann-Hollweg made a slip when he talked of a treaty as a scrap of paper and about hacking his way through. That had a bad effect."

Equally pointed was the remark of a practical Briton: "It was a good thing that the Germans violated the neutrality of Belgium; otherwise, we might not have gone in, which would have been fatal for us. If Germany had crushed France and kept the Channel ports, the next step would have been a war in which we should have had to deal with her single-handed."

I would rather catch the drift of a nation's purpose from the talk of statesmen in the lobby or in the club than from their official pronouncements. Von Bethmann-Hollweg had said in public what was universally accepted in private. He had let the cat out of the bag. England's desire to preserve the neutrality of Belgium was not altogether ethical. If Belgium's coast had been on the Adriatic rather than on the British Channel, her wrongs would not have had the support of British arms.