

THE WAR FOR THE WORLD

were deserting their fatherlands), winding up of enemy companies, and ruthless sentences for purely technical offences pronounced by panic-stricken magistrates, whose *obiter dicta* occasionally reveal a childishness beyond words.

Thus a commercial traveller, a British subject, was not allowed to return to his American home on the ground that the goods he represented *ought* to have been made in England. A German-speaking witness was told to learn a language worth speaking.

This Prussianism *pro tem.* has only been made possible by the device of a Coalition Government, for this is not, as it pretends, a union of all the talents—*that*, as Herbert Spencer pointed out half a century ago, could be better secured by utilizing the best business men—but a shield against criticism and a cover for blunders. As Lord Loreburn said so excellently in the House of Lords, a parliamentary danger relieved is not a national danger relieved. The Defence of the Realm Act is in fact a Defence of the Cabinet Act. The rapidity with which war reverse generations of history is only another proof of its degenerative character—war is perhaps really the test of a people, not of their brute strength, but of whether their constitution is a reality alive in their spirit or a mere dead heritage. Of course all the other belligerents have slid back as swiftly as Britain, but *corruptio optimi pessima*. It does not seem to occur to anybody that a great nation must take a little risk for a great principle.

XV.

Nor can the Government be accused of not representing the people, for the mob has bettered the Government *oblawas* (or alien drives) by *pogroms* (attacks on property, though happily free from murder), and it clamours for still more internments (regardless of the expense, and of the waste of labour-force), still more high-handed hampering of neutrals, and for non-recognition of naturalization or scraps of paper. Lloyd's and the Baltic Exchange suspend members, there is a Stock Exchange "purge," shipping companies refuse to embark emigrants. Town councillors remove the name of the German maker from the dial of the parish clock, and—with a still more comical desire to put back the clock of civilization—a Mr. Herbert Stephen writes to *The Times* that it would be "exceedingly disagreeable to have the same time here as in Germany." How truly observes Rolland, "Un grand peuple assailli par la guerre n'a pas seulement ses frontières à défendre,