

BERNHARDISM IN ENGLAND

by which we are restrained from calling the spirit of war a virtue ; indeed, we never call it a virtue in the individual if he shows it by knocking another individual down and taking his watch ; and not often if he shows it merely by hitting another individual in the eye because he dislikes the look of him. And this restraint is irksome to us, or to some of us, like the restraints of decency. So, when war comes, we delight in the chance to escape from it, just as men used to delight in the sanctification of indecency at heathen festivals. Bernhardism, in fact, is a kind of Paganism. It is the glorification of what is commonly called the natural man, that is to say of the man to whom the spirit is merely a thorn in the flesh which he would pluck out if he could. And the essence of Bernhardism is a delight in the state of war because it gives an excuse for worshipping this human nature, rather than some remote God towards whom human nature must painfully aspire. In time of peace this human nature is a nuisance and a shame, and the Christian hates war just because it does give a use and a sanction to all our unregenerate qualities. But the Bernhardist, being a Pagan, loves it for that very reason ; and you can tell him at once by the relief and joy which he betrays when he can abandon himself to the chartered Paganism of war.

It may be thought that I have made too much of the passages I have quoted. From their very language