

1914 War Illustrated and Described

All humanity's previous experience of war has been eclipsed and utterly dwarfed by this war. Some of us who are of middle age have heard veterans of the Crimea and the Indian Mutiny tell of those wars and have talked with men who fought in the Civil war in the United States. Veterans of the war waged by Germany against France in 1870 are still living. Even the youngest Canadian school child knows and feels something of the part played by our country in the South African war of fourteen years ago and of the meaning of that chapter in the Empire's history.

But none of these wars, nor any other war since history began, is at all comparable with the present struggle which is convulsing Europe and making itself felt all around the world. In the past war used to consist of some days of marching, a day or two of violent fighting, and then advance or retreat, according to the outcome of the battle. In this war a battle has meant a couple of millions of men locked in a life-and-death grapple extending over three hundred miles and lasting for weeks.

The causes of other great wars, the steps that led to them, have often been extremely obscure; and the questions of who was in the right and who was in the wrong have baffled historians. But this war is of an entirely different description. Its causes and the whole manner in which it was brought about lie plain before the eyes of all the world in the light of open day. The facts are all matter of public record.

They stand, and will stand unalterable until the end of time, in the State documents laid before the House of Commons and the whole civilized world by Sir Edward Grey, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. All the other documents that have since been made public by other Governments, including the garbled and incomplete records put forward at Berlin, have but served to pile up higher the mass of proof that the guilt of this war rests upon Germany, which long and murderously brooded over its plottings to make German military might the master of human destinies, in a world-wide German Empire.

The speeches of Sir Edward Grey in Parliament and of Mr. Asquith, on the occasion of the State documents being laid on the table, are utterances of profound historic importance, as those State documents are likewise of profound historic value. Sir Edward Grey's speech, which was delivered not many hours before the war began, is couched throughout in words of extraordinary moderation and restraint; while heavy with the sense of war, it is the speech of a great peace Minister, and as we read it again, and ponder it, the calm marshalling of deeds and official utterances is irresistible. It is the iron logic of fact, of event.

Why are we at war, we people of Canada, shoulder to shoulder with the people of the British Isles and the people of all the rest of the Empire? Because in this great struggle of the spirit of freedom against the demon of force, British freedom is at stake. We are fighting in defence of everything that makes life worth living, in defence of every ideal by which our country exists as a civilized community. It is a war to defend the security of our national future. To come down to particulars and details in answer to the question of why the British Empire and the nations fighting in alliance with us are engaged in this war with the Empires of German and Austria-Hungary, the plain facts speak for themselves.

The whole aim and object of the militarist regime which for a half century past has absolutely controlled Germany has been avowedly to make the German people subservient at home and feared abroad. Every ingenuity of the science of destruction has been developed with absorbing energy, and no consideration of pity or humanity has been allowed to interfere with the decrees of the god of "Blood and Iron." The minds of the German people

have been poisoned. Civil liberties do not exist in Germany, there is no freedom of the press, no public opinion, as there is public opinion among the peoples who are free and self-governing.

The German god of "Blood and Iron" is a deity with no bowels of compassion. He grinds under his heel the small nations he has sworn to protect, and talks of a sacred treaty as "a scrap of paper." He flings bombs from the sky upon sleeping cities, scornful of women and children. He burns towns and villages, and slaughters the old and the weak, not in anger and lust, but according to an iron rule. He is merciless even with his own. He flings them in close formation on certain death. They must "hack their way through," or die. "Better to lose an army corps than change a plan." It is all force—force—force—soulless and cruel and barbaric. It is divorced from all moral considerations—from mercy, from justice, from pity. Until this system is broken and crushed, there can be no peace in this world.

How did this system precipitate the present war? It resorted to a devious course of procedure. On July 23, Austria presented to Serbia an ultimatum making demands the acceptance of which would have been for Serbia national suicide. The assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Imperial crown of Austria-Hungary was the pretext which was seized upon for the purpose of crushing Serbia. The ultimatum gave Serbia only forty-eight hours in which to submit. Serbia made an humble reply, agreeing to nearly all demands and offering to submit the others to the Hague Tribunal. This offer Austria-Hungary insultingly rejected. Nothing can be plainer than that Germany dictated that ultimatum, and coerced Austria-Hungary throughout that whole course of events.

Let us cite impartial witnesses. Admiral Mahan, retired, of the United States Navy, recognized as a foremost authority on sea power and naval strategy and on historical questions, has written:

"The aggressive insolence of Austria-Hungary's ultimatum to Serbia, taken with the concession by the latter of all the demands except those which were too humiliating for their national self-respect, indicate that the real cause of the war is other than that set forth by the ultimatum. Knowing from past experience how the matter must be viewed in Russia, it is incredible that Austria would have ventured on the ultimatum unless she was assured beforehand of the consent of Germany to it. The inference is irresistible that the substance of the ultimatum was the pretext for a war already determined on as soon as a plausible occasion offered."

Let us cite another impartial witness, the New York World, which, in dealing with the campaign headed by Count Bernstorff, the German Ambassador at Washington, to endeavor to change the verdict of public opinion in the United States, a campaign which has failed to secure a reversal of the United States verdict against Germany, says:

"The arguments employed do not appeal to the American mind. With every desire to be fair to all sides, the overwhelming majority of editorial writers are able to see in the war only a cataclysm provoked by German militarism, with the object of making Germany the predominant Power in Europe. When Professor Munsterburg and others denounce Britain as 'a traitor to the Teuton race,' because she sides with Russia, America, Americans recall that until the fact that until recent years Germany's great ambition was a Russo-German alliance against France and England."

It is well known that what Bismarck aimed at was a "Kaiserbund," and alliance of the three Kaisers—German, Austrian and Russian—against the rest of Europe, with the idea of later on making Austria-Hungary part of the German Empire. But the European developments took another course. The alliances formed between France and Russia, and Great Britain and France created a situation which made it inevitable that the course taken last July by Germany in making Austria-Hungary its tool in the matter of the ultimatum to Serbia would provide a pretext for Germany to strike. Germany deliberately took measures to provide this pretext. Sir Edward Grey

strained every effort to preserve the peace of Europe. He made proposal after proposal, offer after offer, France, Russia and Italy concurring, but Germany in every case refusing.

Germany was determined on war. In the words of Imperial Chancellor von Bethmann Hollweg: "If a nation will not, or cannot, spend so much on its armaments that it can force its way through the world, it must fall back into the second row. The weak become the prey of the strong. Parchment is parchment, steel is steel." These words were uttered more than a year ago. They may well be cited here by way of preface to the mention of the "scrap of paper" declaration by the same Imperial Chancellor von Bethmann Hollweg, who is the German Emperor's chief Minister of State, not responsible to the German people, for the German people have not responsible Government, but responsible only to the Emperor.

That speech will stand forever in history as the most striking utterance of the spirit of the whole cancerous system of systematic double-dealing and cynical faithlessness which had grown up under the military autocracy at Berlin. In his last interview with the British Ambassador at Berlin, Sir Goschen, on August 4, the Imperial Chancellor, when he made his "infamous proposal" that Great Britain should allow the violation of the neutrality of Belgium, said that the treaty, signed by Germany as well as by Great Britain, guaranteeing Belgian neutrality, was "just a scrap of paper." The New York World on August 29, after recalling the fact that Magna Charta, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence and the decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States are "just scraps of paper," said:

"The Hay-Pauncefote Treaty is 'a scrap of paper,' and one of the most brilliant moral victories won by President Wilson is the Act of Congress which voluntarily repealed the violation of the terms of that 'scrap of paper.' Respect for these 'scraps of paper' measure a nation's honor no less than its freedom. Our democracy itself is only 'a scrap of paper,' but it looses forces no autocrat can stay. The German army is the most wonderful military machine ever constructed by the hand and brain of man, but in the final reckoning of history this 'scrap of paper' will prove more powerful than all the Kaiser's legions."

The utterances of the press of the United States are noteworthy because the United States is not involved in this war, and because the people of the United States are an intelligent and reading people. To quote one more utterance of one of the journals of highest standing in the United States, out of the multitudes of similar utterances that might be quoted, the New York Outlook says:

"History will hold the German Emperor responsible for this war. Austria would never have made her indefensible attack on Serbia if she had not been assured beforehand of the support of Germany. The German Emperor's consent to co-operate with Great Britain in mediation would have put a stop to Austria's advance. To doubt that Germany and Austria have been in alliance in this act of brigandage is to shut one's eyes to all the signs."

With the violation of the neutrality of Belgium by Germany the war began. Great Britain, having exhausted every possible effort to avert the war, was finally compelled by its most sacred obligations, as well as by the necessity of protecting both itself and the Empire, to take action, which it did with the instant and unanimous approval and support of the whole Empire. It is the British Empire that Germany has been planning all along to destroy. "The old century saw a German Europe," said the Emperor. "The new one shall see a German world. The trident of power over the sea must be in our hands." Said Mr. Asquith in his speech at the Guildhall on September 4:

"The ultimate and not far distant aim of Germany was to crush the independence and the autonomy of the free States of Europe. First Belgium, then Holland and Switzerland—countries, like our own, imbued and sustained with the spirit of liberty—we were, one after the other, to be bent to the yoke, and these ambitions were fed and fostered by a body of new doctrines and new philosophy preached by professors and learned men in Germany. The free and full self-development