

SOME PROGNOSTICATIONS AND A PREFACE

like Germany, "a country over-civilized in thought and under-civilized in action," and *à propos* of Nietzsche's teaching I wrote:

"Human nature is like Venice or Holland—a province slowly wrested from the sea, and secured by dams or dykes. Woe to him who makes a breach in the sea walls!"

For here is the true **WAR FOR THE WORLD**—this perpetual struggle of land and sea, this tenacious beating of the waves of barbarism against the dykes of civilisation, to regain the ground won from the waste of waters; this tireless labour of the forces of Good to conserve their gains and reclaim marshes yet undrained.

VII.

It is not only the Dutch who have

"With mad labour fished the land to shore."

Marvell's lines apply to many another territory netted from the ocean:

"How did they rivet with gigantic piles,
Thorough the centre their new-catchèd miles,
And to the stake a struggling country bound
Where barking waves still beat the forced ground."

Those who are familiar with our oozy eastern coast are aware how much soil there is which is half-way or at every other stage between land and water. We have, for example, saltings which may be grazed over at certain times, but not, say, during the high spring tides, or which, reclaimed by a sea-wall, rise to the status of marshes; we have sands now impassable, now high and dry; we have pasture land which gradually improves into arable land, and responds regularly to the plough. What is "fleet" or creek at noon is causeway at sunset, and where the cowman strode at sunrise eels may gambol at twilight. The battle between sea and land, with man as ally or negligent neutral, goes on pauselessly all along the line, with here a retreat and there an advance, and with, on the whole, a measurable shrinkage of land or a definite repulse of sea.

This is precisely the battle of Ormuzd and Ahriman in the spiritual war zone. But, carried on obscurely and continuously at points innumerable in periods of superficial peace, it is not often that it ranges itself so visibly and picturesquely as in the rival battalions of Great Britain and Germany, nor that a war for the