

THE WAR FOR THE WORLD

nance to Prussianism is too inracinated in my breast to be uprooted merely because the German machine has ground out a few victories. Rather do I feel like Herbert Spencer at the Athenæum Club when, having inadvertently challenged a young billiard champion, he remarked solemnly after his astonishing licking: "Young man! To play billiards as I do shows a sensible care for recreation, but to play billiard, as you do argues a great deal of wasted time." The German machine, according to Dr. Sadler, who seems not far from admiring it, cannot be imitated in parts: it works only as a whole. And I must firmly refuse to have Prussia at any price, even at the risk of being considered an early Edwardian.

VI.

Early in the 'nineties, even before Edward VII. had contracted his apprehension of Germany and while Nietzsche lay hidden in the decent obscurity of the German language, unknown and unmentioned in England—O halcyon fabular period!—I was couching the lance of levity at this inspired misleader of modern thought, and throwing off irreverent impressions of the Kaiser who had come in a cocked hat to Venice to visit Umberto I.—even at that delirious moment of music and pageantry I see that I wondered how long the Italian alliance would last—and had inconsiderately moored his great white yacht, the *Hohenzollern*, exactly opposite my window.

"This young man," I wrote,¹ "from all I have observed since he became my neighbour, lives a highly coloured dramatic existence, in which there are sixty minutes to every hour, and sixty seconds to every minute, the sort of life that should have pleased Walter Pater. He must be a disciple of Nietzsche, a lover of the strong and splendid, this German gentleman who is just off to Vienna to prance at the head of fifteen hundred horsemen. While he lived opposite me it was all excursions and alarums. As a neighbour an Emperor is distinctly noisy."

I proceeded to point out—while admitting his exceptional virtues for a king—the danger which a monarch, with such a nursery passion for playing at soldiers, was to a semi-constitutional country

¹ See my book, "Without Prejudice" (originally published in the *Pall Mall Magazine*).