

back of the head of the Emperor of Germany and, I am afraid, in the minds of the people of Germany themselves, was that Germany was superior to all the rest of the world, that it was her destiny to rule, and rule, as they imagined, for the benefit of mankind. They have made it abundantly clear that if the Allies should be defeated in this war the result would be the annihilation of Belgium as an independent nation, the dismemberment of France, the degradation of England to the rank of a second-rate power, the absorption of Holland, and the dominance of Europe by a military despotism. The full significance of the struggle has been more than once declared by the Kaiser himself in this formula: "There is no will but my will, there is no law but my law—the law which I myself lay down." This means that if Germany were to be victorious in this war, a setback for years and perhaps for centuries would be given to the conquests for freedom, for progress, for the advance of democracy, for the elevation of the race, which have been won by the practical good sense of England and by the idealism of France.

If any proof were needed of those conquests, the proof is supplied by the conduct of the dominions, the colonies and the dependencies all over the world which acknowledge British sovereignty. It is a well-known fact that German publicists and German military writers have prophesied that whenever a continental war should come England would be powerless to take part in it; that the moment the first shot was fired England would be torn by internecine factions; her possessions beyond the seas would sever their connection. We must not be surprised at this conclusion of those who believe that the only rule of government is force. But German publicists have yet to learn that there is a greater force than force, and that the British Empire, resting upon the basis of freedom is more durable than the German Empire resting upon the basis of blood and iron. If anything could open their eyes it would be the spectacle of British colonists from all over the world taking their places behind England in the struggle in which she is now engaged. Such a spectacle is well calculated to cause wonder and surprise to the apostles of German "Kultur" and to give hope and joy to those who believe that our system, for which men die, is not a system under which a

man, no matter who he be, can say, "There is no will but my will, there is no law but my law—the law which I lay down." It is a system under which the law is laid down by the joint action of the King and the people—the law to which the King himself is subject as much as the lowest of his subjects. Such is the spectacle which has been presented to the world in this war, and it is in many respects a spectacle which gives us British subjects a just right to feel proud.

During the recess my right hon. friend the Prime Minister and some of his colleagues have expressed the view, not in a way to which I take exception, that the British system as it exists to-day ought to be altered so as to give the Dominions a voice in all questions of peace and war. If I mention the matter to-day it is not because I intend here and now to enter into any controversy upon it, though the subject be highly controversial first, from the point of view of the Imperial authorities, who have more than once in recent times stated that in their opinion such an assumption would be perilous, and also in the view of the Dominions, who, if they were to assume such a power, must assume also very heavy burdens in time of peace as well as in time of war. But, I repeat, I do not intend at this moment to enter into any controversy. The task which is weighing upon us is heavy enough not to increase it by the introduction of subjects which may be not only controversial but which at the time may not be practical. The time will come when peace will be restored, and then will be the time to discuss these and many other problems which will have to be taken up by all British peoples. In the meantime, for my part, I hardly believe that any system that can be devised, or that can be reduced by legislation to any complete form applicable to the daughter nations of the Empire, can ever have the same inspiring grandeur, or the same patriotic efficiency, as the action of the Dominions all over the world—the voluntary, spontaneous action of all those Dominions—lining themselves up behind England in the hour of her trial.

Conscription has never met with any favour in the British Isles. It has never been consistent with the genius of the British people to use the strong arm of the law to fill up the ranks of her army. England is the least military of the nations of Europe. She has long given