

SOME PROGNOSTICATIONS AND A PREFACE

by creating the glamour of peace, to offset the glamour of war, that any real amelioration can be effected. I need not say I am in the greatest sympathy with the objects of your meeting; but your peace crusade will need an enormously greater organization to make any dints upon the mailed battalions of war."

To add to the difficulty of my turning pro-German now, I actually placed the responsibility for the coming war on Germany's shoulders years before she had written Austria's ultimatum to Serbia, and, like Mrs. Partington trying to keep back the Atlantic with her broom, I tried to keep back the German Ocean with my pen. Through my blank-verse tragedy, "The War God," produced at His Majesty's Theatre by Sir Herbert Tree in 1911 (and written several years earlier), humanity was invited to consider the rival issues raised for it by Bismarck and Tolstoy, the two giant protagonists of the century, the WAR FOR THE WORLD, beside which the material struggle between Alba and Gotha for the mastery of the planet was a triviality. The mysterious assassination of this play in the heart of London in broad daylight may perhaps be counted, like the infinitely more deplorable murder of Jaurès, among the earliest casualties in the cosmic combat. It was followed—soon after the outburst of war—by the Foreign Office prohibition of my play "The Melting Pot" at the request of Russia. A third play of mine, "The Next Religion," had already been prohibited by the Lord Chamberlain. But these evidences of England's growing passion for Prussianism were hardly calculated to increase my liking for it.

XIII.

Not that censorship of the stage is new—it was, in fact, the one piece of Prussianism left like a fly in amber in the British Constitution. An historian remarks that in Tudor days the dramatist was practically outside Magna Charta, "liable to instant imprisonment without bail, trial, or appeal at the hands of the stage censor." It may even be admitted that the institution was primarily designed, not to protect morals, but politicians and princes, and that it was the politico-satirical plays of Fielding that called forth the more constitutional Licensing Act of 1737. A dramatist might be well content to be quashed in company with the author of "Rule Britannia," whose historic tragedy "Edward and Eleonora" was prohibited, not to mention Shakespeare (a whole