

8 HOW WE OUGHT TO FEEL ABOUT THE WAR

the analytical subtlety of Tocqueville convinced him that in periods of excitement madmen fit for Bedlam have exerted immense influence on the course of events. The Reign of Terror teaches the lesson that humane and just men may tolerate outrageous injustice when they have become convinced that the overthrow of terrible despotism may cause a reaction fatal to the liberties of their country. This toleration of ill-doing is a ghastly delusion. But it is an error into which some of the most generous of men have now and again fallen. This fact may at least remind Englishmen that the errors generated by a false political as by a false religious creed diminish the moral guilt of good men infected by its errors, and may explain the boldness of eminent professors—most of them far from wicked men—who, in childlike or childish ignorance of the conduct pursued by England and France, have stepped forward as apologists of German policy and crime.

The plain truth is, though this thought is often overlooked, that the equity which demands the careful consideration of every circumstance which explains the conduct of the Kaiser and his subjects, and sometimes may seem to mitigate its deep moral guilt, is a necessary condition for understanding the strength of the cause on behalf of which England and her allies have entered upon the most tremendous war which the world has ever witnessed, and their determination not to lay down their arms until the triumph of justice is complete. Equity does not mean leniency. It has no connexion with that flabby and miscalled 'charity' which assumes that, in every great moral conflict, each side has been partly in the right and partly in the wrong. This doctrine, with its specious appearance of tolerant good nature, can hardly be distinguished from the cynical dogma