

TOPICS OF THE DAY

THROUGHOUT the later stages of the war, the words of Maximilian Harden have been ringing in our ears. "We willed it," he said: "we had to will it. Our might shall create a new law for Europe." This new law has taken the shape of a savage contempt for all humanitarian considerations, to say nothing of the code of honour as between nations. Attacks from sea and sky on defenceless coast-towns have been followed by the submarine sink-or-swim policy; and that again by asphyxiating bombs, gas curtains, tongues of fire, and poisoned wells. It may take some time to draw up a detailed bill of indictment against our foes for these and other atrocities: enough has been said to show that chivalry has passed from war—at least from war as made by Germany! But the rest of the German journalist's confession should be promptly dealt with. When the time comes for peace negotiations, the missing evidence as to responsibility for the war must be demanded as an indispensable preliminary. Even without it the picture is now nearly complete. But when the representatives of the Allies take their seats at the council-table, they should begin by calling on the beaten enemy to produce the correspondence between Berlin and Vienna which preceded the German ultimatum to Russia. The Germans went into the war with a lie on their lips. They said it had been "forced on them"—a phrase which originated in the well-known maxim of Bismarck's policy to the effect that every war in which Germany might engage should be given the appearance of a war that had been sought for by the other side. A like cunning prompted the request made to Britain in 1912 to give an undertaking beforehand that she would remain neutral in any war that might be "forced on" Germany. And so now the phrase has been repeated