

## PREFACE

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happen. Nothing will be demonstrated by the next war. If it is made, in spite of warnings, but the impossibility of making war, except, of course, for the purpose of self-destruction. I do not for a moment deny that it is possible for nations to plunge themselves and their neighbours into a frightful series of catastrophes which would probably result in the overturn of all civilised and ordered government. That is, of course, possible; but when we say that war is impossible we mean that it is impossible for the modern State to carry on war under the modern conditions with any prospect of being able to carry that war to a conclusion by defeating its adversary by force of arms on the battlefield. No decisive war is possible. Neither is any war possible, as I proceed to show, that will not entail, even upon the victorious Power, the destruction of its resources and the break-up of society. War therefore has become impossible, except at the price of suicide. That would, perhaps, be a more accurate way of stating the thesis of my book."

"I understand; but do you think you have proved this?"

"Certainly," said M. Bloch. "So far I have only spoken about the improvements that have been wrought in two branches of the service, viz., in the magazine rifle and the greater efficiency of artillery. Taken by themselves, they are sufficiently serious to justify grave doubt as to whether or not we have not reached a stage when the mechanism of slaughter has been so perfected as to render a decisive battle practically impossible; but these two elements are only two. They are accompanied by others which are still more formidable to those who persist in contemplating war as a practical possibility."

"To what are you referring?" I asked.