

PHARISAISM AND WAR

EVEN in January we still talk more of the war than of anything else, and amid our varied conversations it is interesting to notice how the arguments and attitude of certain people first bore and then nauseate us. It is not the strength of their expressions ; for others use stronger language and are more definite in condemnation of German policy, without producing anything like the same senseless distaste. Nor can we trace our revolt to the daily prejudices which will have to be surrendered if we commit our lives to the guidance of reason ; it is born of something noble and Christian within us.

The truth is that we find ourselves face to face with Pharisaism, and we do not like its aspect. Unfortunately Pharisaism is at present epidemic over much of this little world of ours, and the typical Briton, in whom foreigners have always found a marked tendency to the disease, is specially liable to be infected. During this war it is no longer foreign critics but our own trusted and patriotic leaders who warn us that there is no danger to our moral tone so imminent and so grave. On every hand are the evidences that it is very easy to fall under the spell. In a country where such an output is expected from the pulpit and the press, a subject guaranteed to be popular is almost irresistible. What a godsend the sins of Germany have been to many a journalist ! How many Nonconformist preachers, conscious of a certain dullness in their sermons since Mr. Balfour's iniquities in connexion with Education Bills could be exposed no longer, put up the paper edition of Bernhardt and knocked him down with all the old satisfying thrills of pulpit battle ! How many an Anglican, whose flock were getting tired of Welsh Disestablishment Sunday after Sunday, found