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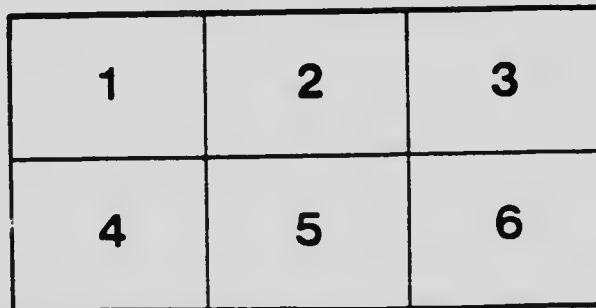
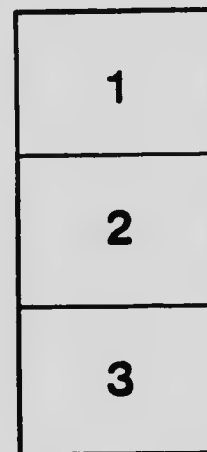
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THE VALUE OF
SMALL STATES

BY

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VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

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When I first heard from Stewart of the Courier that Buonoparte had declared that the interests of small states must always succumb to great ones, I said, "Thank God! he has sealed his fate: from this moment his fall is certain."—S. T. COLERIDGE.

THE VALUE OF SMALL STATES

UPON the old controversy between Brutus and Caesar the last two generations in Germany have had no difficulty in coming to a decision. The republic is decidedly out of fashion, and with it the whole fabric of idealism upon which in 1848 republican conclusions were wont to be erected. The modern German is all for Caesarism, for a big state, a big army, a big navy, and for a long course of progressive national expansion under the dazzling guidance of the Hohenzollern house. Of the old gentle cosmopolitan feeling, which suffused the literature of the classical period, there is now not a trace surviving. *Weltbürgertum* has given place to the *Nationalstaat*, just as the delicate melodies of Mozart have been succeeded by the obstreperous and clashing brilliance of Strauss. The eloquence of Schiller is still popular, but the sentiment which inspired such a piece as the *History of the Revolt of the United Netherlands* is as dead in Germany as Kant's famous dream of Universal Peace. Realism is the fetish of the hour. Politics must be real or they are despised as shadows; and when a German speaks of *Realpolitik* he means a policy based on material interests, supported by brute force and liberated from the trammels of the moral conscience.

It is not surprising that the triumphs of German Caesarism in the world of fact and idea have led to a very general disparagement of the value and utility of small states. The argument may be gathered from

the pages of Treitschke or indeed from any of the numerous journalists who have drawn their political sustenance from that bitter and uncompromising apostle of imperial methods. It runs very much as follows. In a small state civic life must necessarily be petty, humble, unambitious. The game of politics must centre round small issues, and thus circumscribed in scope, loses the ethical value of scale. Great affairs envisaged on a large horizon have a power of stirring the passionate and imaginative elements in man, which are apt, save in the rarer cases, to respond to stimuli in proportion to their magnitude. Existence in a small state may be elegant, charming, idyllic, compatible with the production of literature and art, but it can never be swept by the great passions which move the world. A small state may create among its members a mild humdrum kind of affection for its history and institutions, but can never be a source of that triumphant pride and hope which lifts citizenship up to the plane of heroism. In a sense it may be said that the history of small states is wound up. They may linger on, preserved by the mutual jealousies of rival Powers or because it is worth nobody's while to attack them, but their bodies will be starved and anaemic and their souls mere echoes of the great movements of mind and emotion which are liberated, almost automatically, by the diurnal movement in great and powerful nations of the social and political machine. Sooner or later the small states will go. They will be absorbed in larger political aggregates. They will follow the line of historical development which has created the large modern states of Europe out of a mosaic of tiny and warring fiefs. And nobody will regret their demise, least of all the citizens themselves.

Indeed, from the point of view of peoples like the Belgians or the Dutch, the moment of inevitable absorption cannot be too rapidly hastened. Only then will they be compelled to discard trifles and to 'think imperially' of serious things. Their geography, political and intellectual, will be enlarged. The art of war will be earnestly practised. The spectator will suddenly become an actor. Great tides of national passion and aspiration will sweep into the tiny state, chasing away impurities, like the majestic ocean suddenly admitted in overwhelming might into a network of landlocked and stagnant pools.

The disciples of Caesarism will even proceed to contend that patriotism in its fullest sense is only possible to large nations. Great states march on, little states mark time. The movement of the great state is continuous and imposing, and, as in the case of other orderly developments, its future can be forecast with a certain degree of exactitude. Guided by the hand of God, the mighty organs which are the chosen vessels of the highest culture upon earth take up, one after another in due sequence, each item of their sacred and providential programme. Thus we have a long historic process ending in the formation of the Prussian kingdom, succeeded by another process leading to the establishment of the German Empire, and to be followed by a third process in the course of which the German Empire will become a world-power, not only supreme on the continent of Europe but exercising a predominant political influence over the whole surface of the globe. Great states have a destiny of which their citizens are conscious. *Et quasi cursores vitae lampada tradunt.* Men come and go, the seasons wax and wane, but each generation in its own brief allotment of life is sustained

by the consciousness that it works on a providential plan, fulfilling one of the grand and mysterious processes of God for the improvement of the world by the spread of German culture. So did the divines of the Dark Ages applaud the forced conversions of Charlemagne.

Even in matters of technical equipment Destiny is said to have decided in favour of the big battalions. It is freely argued in Germany that a perfect organization of educational machinery is only possible to the opulence and minute articulation of a great nation, for the more powerful the state, the richer will be the fund available for museums, art galleries, and libraries, and the larger the class capable of enjoying them. Great states in fact resemble great businesses which on a given expenditure of capital realize a higher rate of profit than their smaller rivals, command wider markets, and exercise a stronger power in barter and sale.

It is easy to understand how the Germans have arrived at this confident and unqualified conclusion as to the worthlessness of small states, seeing that their own late arrival into the circle of the Great Powers was due to the long continuance of that *Kleinstaaterei*, that small-state system, which attracts so much hostile fire from the ranks of the Prussian historians. The humiliations suffered by Germany at the hands of Napoleon, the glory of the War of Liberation, which may be called the first common act of the German people, the fatal relapse into the old system of loose impotent federation, and finally the foundation of the German Empire under Prussian hegemony—these sharply contrasted periods of national history all point to the same lesson, the paralysis bred of disunion and the power generated by unity.

Even now the disciplinarian conscience of Prussia

judges that the unity of Germany is all too imperfectly achieved. There are the separate states, there are the suppressed nationalities, there are the active and contentious political parties whose struggles impair the majesty of the Reichstag, and whose criticism weakens and perplexes the direction of imperial policy. When the Social Democrats, or the Poles, or the Catholics of the Centre embarrass the Government, good German imperialists look with envy at the social and religious cohesion of Great Britain. There is then no ground for wonder if, to the patriotic German of modern times, a contracted spirit of localism, only to be eradicated by a strenuous effort of the national will, seems to be the principal flaw in the political character of the German race, as it has undoubtedly been the chief source of German political impotence in the past. And we can easily see how Germans, realizing the evils of past disunion, and exercising that tendency to generalize which is inveterate in the Teutonic intelligence, come to the conclusion that the happiness and advance of mankind are bound up in the expansion of great states and in the disappearance of small ones.

It must be confessed that this general attitude is affected by considerations of a different order. Outside the limits of the German Empire lies a *Germania irredenta*, a line of small states inhabited in whole or part by men of German stock and once included in the imperial orbit.

'Of the territory', writes Dr. Rohrbach, 'which belonged to the German Empire five hundred years ago and was inhabited by men of German stock, more than a third has been abstracted from modern Germany—the German lands of Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland. If you add in the Livonian

territories from the Memel to the Gulf of Finland, where it is true the mass of the peasantry was not German, but where the townsfolk and the knights were German and the princes and nobility members of the Holy Roman Empire, then modern Germany is only half the size of Germany at the end of the Middle Ages. We leave out of our consideration those territories which at the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century were only bound to the Empire by a loose connexion and belonged naturally to France and Italy, like the Free County of Burgundy, the duchies of Savoy, Milan, Mantua, Verona, and confine ourselves in the first place to territories inhabited by ancient German settlements, and secondly to the Slavonic lands of the East which were comprised in the German colonizing movement. To these Bohemia at that time belonged, for its penetration by German influence was only checked by the counter reformation. It was not till about 1400 that the Kingdom of Poland pushed the German frontier further west. Posen and a piece of West Prussia and Schleswig, though not entirely inhabited by Germans, constitute the only territorial gain which the modern German Empire has to show in comparison with the old Empire. But what are these gains in comparison with the losses! The ring of territories encircling modern Germany, inhabited by more than 20,000,000 men of German stock, politically and even in national sentiment estranged from German thought.'

To a person imbued with a belief in the historical mission of Germany this contraction of the imperial orbit, so accurately described by Dr. Rohrbach, is one of those disagreeable facts only to be fitted into a rational scheme of the Universe if they are destined to be speedily reversed. Sooner or later Providence must intend that the broken unity of the mediaeval German Empire should be reunited to the parent stock. And

so the argument descends from the high plateau of general ideas to the low ground of political appetite which is watered by the streams of national memory.

In view of this interpretation it is pertinent to ask what the world has gained from small states in the past, how far they justify their existence in the present, and whether they are likely to perform any valuable function in the economy of the future.

Almost everything which is most precious in our civilization has come from small states, the Old Testament, the Homeric poems, the Attic and the Elizabethan drama, the art of the Italian Renaissance, the common law of England. Nobody needs to be told what humanity owes to Athens, Florence, Geneva, or Weimar. The world's debt to any one of these small states far exceeds all that has issued from the militant monarchies of Louis XIV, of Napoleon, of the present Emperor of Germany. It may, perhaps, be objected that the apparition of artistic, literary, or scientific genius is an incalculable matter of hazard unaffected by the size of the political community in which the great man happens to be born, and that we are only entitled to infer from these examples that a small state may provide an atmosphere in which genius may thrive. It is, however, a relevant answer to much of the criticism now levelled in Germany against small states, to remind ourselves that in the particular points of heroic and martial patriotism, civic pride and political prudence, they have often reached the highest levels to which it is possible for humanity to attain, and that from Thucydides, Plato, and Aristotle, as well as from the illustrious school of Florentine historians and publicists, the world has learnt nine-tenths of its best political wisdom. America has particular reasons for gratefully

recognizing one of the smallest and most illustrious of the city states of Europe. The seed of modern democratic theory was sown in Geneva, and being scattered on the hither shore of the North American continent by small communities, organized on the model of Calvin, burgeoned into the great Republic of the West.

Nor is it fanciful, in estimating the causes which contributed to the peculiar brilliance first of the Greek and then of the Italian city state, to attribute some weight to the question of size. Indeed, if we do this, we shall only be echoing the voice of antiquity itself. In the famous passage in which he depicts the lineaments of the ideal state, Aristotle gives the opinion that a city so large that its citizens are unable to hear the voice of a single town-crier has passed the limits of wholesome growth. This conclusion was based on the view that every citizen must take a direct part in the political deliberations of the state to which he belongs. Indeed, had the states of antiquity exceeded the limits compatible with direct government, the world would have lost a good part of its political education. As it was, the contracted span of these communities carried with it three conspicuous benefits. The city state served as a school of patriotic virtue, not in the main of the blustering and thrasonical type, but refined and sublimated by every grace of instinct and reason. It further enabled the experiment of a free direct democratic government to be made, with incalculable consequences for the political thinking of the world. Finally, it threw into a forced and fruitful communion minds of the most different temper, giving to them an elasticity and many-sidedness which might otherwise have been wanting or less conspicuous, and stimulating, through the close mutual competition which it engendered, an

intensity of intellectual and artistic passion which has been the wonder of all succeeding generations and such as can never be reached in great states organized for the vulgarity of aggressive war.

So much at least will be generally conceded. The question for us, however, is not to assess our debt to the city states of the past, but to consider what arguments may be found for safeguarding the existence of the smaller nation states of the modern world. And first of all it is relevant to ask whether there may not be some advantage to humanity at large arising from the fact that certain communities are withdrawn by reason of the scale from the competition of armaments. To certain military minds in Germany it seems to be a lamentable thing that any community of human beings should be organized on a basis of peace, or that the policy of any Government should be steadily directed towards the preservation of its subjects from the horrors of war. Let us assume for a moment that this extravagant proposition is true, and that the Swiss, the Danes, the Dutch, and the Belgians would be greatly improved in their general morality if they were thrown into some big military empire with an aggressive world-policy and a Providential destiny to impose its culture on the world, and all the other familiar paraphernalia of the Potsdam philosophy. We have still to ask ourselves the question whether, even from the selfish point of view of the Great Powers who are blessed with the moral luxury of a conscript army, there may not be some convenience attaching to the continued existence of small oases of peace in a world nervously equipping itself for Armageddon? Has Italy no cause to be grateful to the Swiss Confederation? Would the Scandinavian kingdoms preserve their unruffled

neutrality if the Danish peninsula were swallowed up by Germany? And has the disappearance of Poland really benefited the two greatest partitioning Powers whose past appetites have brought them the heritage of restless anxiety which belongs to the vigil of coterminous states? Indeed it is not easy to measure the injurious consequences which have grown from the disappearance of that middle kingdom of Lotharingia which once served as a buffer between France and Germany, or from the extinction of the Polish nation at the close of the eighteenth century. By common confession European diplomacy suffers from nerves; and the nervous tension is necessarily increased with every addition to the ranks of the rivals. The entanglements likely to give rise to conflict are proportionate to the number and weight of the Powers which stand inside the ring. Every ally who joins one or other of the coalitions brings with him a whole cluster of new interests which the coalition is bound to defend, and thereby increases the chance of war. Every Power which stands aside lessens the general strain and contracts the area of inflammable controversy.

But the advantages to be derived from the existence of small buffer states are subject to the clear condition that their independence and neutrality are respected. Let us consider for a moment what the world would have gained if the German Emperor and his advisers had all along regarded the violation of Belgian neutrality as an unthinkable crime. Not only would Great Britain be now at peace, but no general European war would have taken place at all. The challenge to Russia was thrown down by Germany because it was calculated in Berlin that by marching through Belgium the Germans could easily crush France before the

Russian peril became insistent. It is absurd to speak of the violation of Belgian neutrality as a 'bitter necessity' forced upon a reluctant country in an unforeseen emergency. It was, on the contrary, the deliberate groundwork for a careful edifice of aggressive diplomacy. The entire plan of the campaign against France was framed on the supposition that the Germans would march through Belgium. The whole scheme of operations against Russia was based on the belief that the total weight of the German military power could be thrown on the eastern frontier by reason of the rapid and crushing success which a German army, advancing through the Belgian gateway, would be able to achieve in France. And upon these two military calculations the ambitious edifice of German world-policy was built. All the plans of the General Staff were secretly framed on the supposition that Belgium would be treated as part of the German Empire in the event of war. It was with this prospect in view that Germany thought it safe to defy Russia in 1909 and to repeat the defiance in 1914. And though it would be difficult to set bounds to the military presumption of Germany, it may be safely assumed that if the Belgian doorway had been patently barred, the diplomacy of the German Empire would have been tuned to a more modest key. The moral of all this is clear enough. The small states should not be abolished: on the contrary, their neutrality should be supported by a guarantee so formidable that the strongest Power would never be tempted in future to infringe it.

We may test the value of these communities by another criterion. The Hague Tribunal has been the object of much silly depreciation, and the military parties in the world are never tired of giving voice to the contempt

in which they involve the whole principle of arbitration. It is true that the belief in the value of pacific solutions chiefly flourishes in small unmilitary states like Holland or in that large and imposing aggregate of small civilian states which goes by the name of the United States of America. And it is equally true that no nation has yet consented or, in the present state of public ethics, is likely to consent to refer matters affecting its 'vital interests, independence, or honour' to an International Tribunal. Nevertheless a considerable number of arbitration treaties have been concluded agreeing to refer differences to the Hague Tribunal; and in the course of the North Sea incident of 1904 the strained relations between England and Russia were greatly eased by the fact that the Hague Conference had already provided a method of procedure by which the dispute might be adjusted without loss of dignity to either side. Arbitration cannot banish war, but it can diminish the accumulation of minor grievances which, if untended, are apt to create that inflamed state of public opinion out of which wars easily arise; and in the case of larger disputes recourse to arbitration has at least the advantage of gaining time. Now the condition of mind which supports the principle of arbitration, and which provides facilities for recourse to it, is only made possible by the existence of communities organized for peace, and standing outside the armed and vigilant rivalries of the great continental Powers.

It is symptomatic of the Prussian spirit to disparage any manifestation of natural feeling which runs counter to the assumed necessities of a militant Empire; and so in books written even by such eminent and moderate men as Prince von Bülow, the late Chancellor of Germany, we find a fixed intention to suppress, so far as

may be, the national characteristics of the Poles, Danes, and men of Latin race who have been incorporated in the Empire. We in England, who have some experience of minor nationalities, cannot read of the recent developments of Prussian policy in Poland without feeling how unintelligent and oppressive it is, and how much better it would be in the interests of internal peace and consolidation, if Germany would throw her mind into a generous and liberal attitude towards the men of alien type whom she has absorbed by conquest. But it is part of the Prussian genius—if a drillmaster can have genius—to regard all variety, not only as troublesome, which it often may be, but as injurious, which it very seldom is. Indeed, one of the principal arguments in favour of the preservation of the small states of Europe (and the same argument applies to the preservation of the state system in America) lies in the fact that these small communities do vary from the set type which is imprinted by steady and powerful governments upon the life and behaviour of the larger Powers. The mere fact of this variety is an enrichment of human experience and a stimulus to self-criticism and improvement. Indeed, the existence of small states operates in the large and imperfect economy of the European system very much in the same way as the principle of individual liberty operates in any given state, preventing the formation of those massive and deadening weights of conventional opinion which impair the free play of individuality, and affording a corrective to the vulgar idea that the brute force of organized numbers is the only thing which really matters in the world.

The critic of small states may also fairly be asked what he means by the word 'civilization'. If civilization is a phrase denoting the sum of those forces which help to

bind men together in civil association, if it means benevolence, dutifulness, self-sacrifice, a lively interest in the things of the mind, and a discerning taste in the things of the sense, then there is no reason to think that these qualities are the special prerogative of great states. Indeed, there is a certain type of harsh and stoical patriotism which, by reason of its austere and arrogant exclusiveness, is inimical to the growth of civilized feeling. It is not confined to big states, for it was present in ancient Sparta ; nor is it the necessary accompaniment even of huge military monarchies. But it is the spirit of modern Prussia, a spirit consistent indeed with the heroic qualities of the barbarous ages, but lacking the sane and temperate outlook of civilized life. All through history the great enemy of human reason has been fanaticism. And there is no reason to believe that the fanaticism of a military state, served by the most destructive artillery in the world, is any bit less injurious to mankind than the spirit which for many centuries of history condemned the religious heretic to the torments of the stake.

It is difficult rightly to assess the contributions which the smaller states of Europe have made during the past century to the sum of human culture. Nor would a mere list of eminent men such as Ibsen and Maeterlinck, of whom every cultivated person has heard, or Gramme, the Belgian inventor of the dynamo, or Van 't Hoff, the famous Dutch chemist, prove more than the indisputable fact that intellectual life of the highest quality may be carried on in such communities. It is of course possible that, if Holland were forced into the German confederation, Dutch painting, which has now reached a level far higher than any attained in recent years in Germany, would suffer no eclipse, and that the Dutch universities would persevere in their work of scholarly theological

exegesis. It is possible that, under the same conditions, the wonderful perfection to which the little kingdom of Denmark has brought the arts of dairy-farming and agriculture would still be maintained. But it would depend entirely upon the degree of liberty and autonomy which a German emperor might be willing to concede, whether this would be so or not, whether the natural currents of hopeful energy would continue to flow or whether they would be effectually sealed up by the ungenial fiat of an alien taskmaster. Upon this it is unnecessary to speculate. But it is strictly pertinent to the argument to remember that the three small states, whose existence is closely and specially threatened by the expansion of Germany, have each developed not only a peculiar and strongly marked economy, but certain special excellences and qualities such as are most likely to be developed in an atmosphere of comparative tranquillity. Thus, apart from the school of landscape painting, the Dutch have set a model to the world in all that pertains to the scientific classification and management of archives, vanquishing in this particular even the French, whose organization of historical learning is so justly famed. Denmark, too, has its own speciality in a very perfect organism for co-operative production in agriculture.

Indeed, one of the advantages flowing from the existence of smaller states consists in the fact that they serve as convenient laboratories for social experiment—a point likely to be appreciated in America, in view of the great mass of material for the comparative study of social and industrial expedients which is provided by the enterprise of the American State legislatures. Such experiments as women's suffrage, or as the State prohibition of the public sale of alcoholic drink, or as a thoroughgoing

application of the Reformatory theory of punishment, would never be seriously discussed in large, old, and settled communities, were it not for the fact that they have been tried upon a smaller scale by the more adventurous legislatures of the New World. Man is an imitative animal, and a study of such an organ as the *Journal of Comparative Legislation* exhibits the increasing uniformity of the problems which confront the legislator, and the increasing monotony of the solutions which he finds to meet them. All over the world industrial, educational, penal legislation tends to conform to type. And within limits the tendency is the necessary and wholesome consequence of the unifying influence of modern industrial conditions. But our enlarged facilities for imitation present obvious dangers, and among them the fatal temptation to borrow a ready-made uniform which does not fit. Small states may fall into this pitfall as well as big ones, but at least their continued existence presents some guarantee for diversity of life and intellectual adventure in a world steadily becoming more monotonously drab in its outer garment of economic circumstance.

No historical state can be driven out of its identity without suffering a moral impoverishment in the process. The evil is not only apparent in the embitterment and lowering of the citizens of the conquered community, whether they are compelled to the agonies of a Polish dispersion, or linger on nursing their rights and wounded pride in the scene of their former independence, but it creates a problem for the conqueror which may very well harden and brutalize his whole outlook on policy. It is never good for a nation to be driven to the employment of harsh measures against any portion of its subjects.

Upon whatever plausible grounds of immediate expediency such measures may be justified, they invariably harden the tone of political opinion, and create an atmosphere of insensibility which spreads far beyond the sphere of the special case and occasion. The acquisition of Alsace-Lorraine by Germany is a case in point. The result of the forcible incorporation of these provinces in the German Empire has been bad for the governed and equally bad for the governors. Coercion is a virus which cannot be introduced into any part of the body politic without risk of a general diffusion of the poison.

It is no idle fancy to suppose that the kind of policy which the Prussian Government has thought fit to adopt towards the alien nationalities of the German Empire has reacted upon its treatment of those German parties whose views do not accord with the strict official convention. No Conservative English statesman would ever dream of denouncing English socialists as Prince von Bülow denounces the social democrats of Germany. But then no English statesman, Liberal or Conservative, would dream of treating any portion of the British Empire as Prince von Bülow treated the German Poles.

It is impossible accurately to assess the value to a nation of the self-esteem which is the legacy of its history. People who weigh everything in material scales may find nothing worth preserving in the historical consciousness of the small nations of Europe. They will argue that the Dutch, the Belgians, the Danes, the Swiss, might be incorporated in the German Empire not only without pain but with a positive accession of material comfort and wealth, and a larger political outlook in the future.

They will even deny that there need be any

moral impoverishment in an exchange of historical memories, under which the incorporated Dutchman would hook himself on to the German pedigree and count Bismarck and Moltke among his deities, while the Dutch sea-dogs of the heroic age would give their names to the cruisers and submarines of the incorporating Empire. In all such reasoning there is very little allowance for the facts of human nature or for the working of the moral principle in man. As no individual can break violently with his past without a moral lesion, so too the rupture of the historical continuity of a state carries with it an inevitable weakening and abasement of public ideals, which may continue for several generations. We need not labour to establish a principle which is grounded on such obvious facts of individual consciousness. But one historical instance may be adduced in support. When in 1580 Portugal was annexed to Spain, then reputed to be the most formidable empire in the world, she suffered a moral as well as a political eclipse from which she has never since recovered. Her nerve seemed to go and by swift stages she sank into listlessness and decay.

Nowhere is the shaping power of this historical consciousness more evident than in the peasant nations of the Balkan Peninsula. These rude and valiant democracies live upon the memories of the past to an extent of which sophisticated peoples have little notion. The great ballad which commemorates the battle of Kossovo, fought against the Turks more than five hundred years ago, is still one of the most important political influences among the southern Slavs. Nor has the memory of the empire of Stephen Dushan, under whom Serbia was the leading Power in the Balkans, ever been allowed to fade among the Serbs, despite tragedies sufficient to

break the spirit of a less stalwart race. To rob the Serbs of their political independence according to the present plan of the German Powers would be a measure difficult to surpass for cruel and purposeless futility. A race which had succeeded in preserving its historical consciousness through centuries of grinding Turkish tyranny would not be likely to renounce its past or its future under the guns of Austria. And even if the improbable came to pass, and a conquered Serbia were to become an obedient and contented fraction of the Austrian Empire, forgetful of heroic ballads and of a long tradition of hardiness and valour, would there be no loss of moral power in the process? To those who measure all virtues by the standard of civic virtue, by intensity of emotional and practical patriotism, the loss would be beyond dispute. A great incentive to the performance of unselfish action would be destroyed, a source of heroic and congenial activity would disappear never to be replaced. Under the hypothesis the Serbs would sink below the level of their blood kinsmen the Slovaks, who, despite the manifold oppressions of their Hungarian masters, still nurture a flame of protesting nationalism. From such political apostasy no nation could ever expect to make a complete moral recovery.

It may be objected that the whole process of European history is summed up by the absorption of the smaller in the larger states; and that if Hanover is reconciled to absorption there is no reason why Holland, Denmark, and Belgium should lodge a protest in advance against their impending fate. To this contentions there is a simple answer. These outlying nations can only be brought into the German fold under compulsion. Their frame of mind is not German, their habits are not

German, their history for the last four centuries has served to multiply points of difference from Germany. They have no desire to submit themselves either to the military or to the financial system of the German Empire. They are not ashamed of their present condition, and are singular enough to hold that human happiness and goodness do not depend upon the size of an army or navy or a budget. It is enough that the citizen of each of these states can call his country his own. Patriotism has nothing whatever to do with spatial extent nor are emotions to be measured by square miles. Great empires are generally full of the variances of unassimilated and discontented men ; and though a country may be weak and small, it may yet be capable of inspiring among its inhabitants the noblest and purest forms of affectionate devotion.

Indeed, the supreme touchstone of efficiency in imperial government lies in its capacity to preserve the small state in the great union. If the British Empire has succeeded in retaining the affections of its scattered members, the result has been due to the wise and easy tolerance which has permitted almost every form of religious, political, and social practice to continue unchecked, however greatly they may vary from the established traditions of the English race. Thus in the Province of Quebec we suffer the existence of a French ultramontane state based on the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, and preserving even to this day many of the social features of a French colony in the age of Louis XIV, a community more extreme in its ecclesiastical rigour than any Roman Catholic state in Europe, and in language, religion, and social habits presenting the sharpest contrast to the English provinces of the Dominion of Canada. The same careful deference

to the pre-existing conditions is shown in every part of our Indian administration, which carries tenderness to the religious scruples of the Mohammedans and Hindoos to a point of delicate solicitude, which no Government in the world has ever before attempted, and only the most practised experience can supply. These, however, are not the methods of the German Empire, nor can they be the methods of any empire which practises a uniform and universal system of military conscription. As soon as the words State and Army become coterminous, a philosophy of violent unification is set up within the body politic, which sooner or later carries everything before it, save the spiritual forces which cannot be broken by any machinery, however despotic and powerful. The Germans have not succeeded in winning either the Poles or the Danes or the Alsatians to their rule, because they have repeated the mistake which England made in Ireland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and which England has never since ceased to lament. They have attempted to manufacture German citizens by violence ; and the history of Alsace-Lorraine under imperial rule has shown how little the policy of violence, however carefully it may be masked by specious political concessions, is availing to change the spiritual allegiance of a people. Indeed the case of Alsace-Lorraine supplies a fair indication of the misfortunes which would ensue upon the compulsory annexation of any one of the small states of Europe by a big military Power. It is not to be imagined that the forced union of these two provinces with Germany has been productive of material injury. On the contrary, they have shared in the expanding industry and commerce of the Empire, and any loss in population due to the emigration of the French has been more than compen-

sated by an influx of Germans. Nevertheless, they have been and continue to be unhappy under the Prussian yoke, Alsace more unhappy than Lorraine, but both sensible of the fact that while material interest binds them to Prussia, the voice of spiritual affinity unites them with the French Republic.

Statistics indeed prove that, even allowing for immigration, the Germans are still in a minority in the two provinces; but this fact in itself is not sufficient to account for the continuing attraction of the French Republic, despite the strong material inducements offered from the other side. The phenomenon indeed is worthy of attention. Here are two provinces which have never enjoyed political independence or the sense of cohesion which such independence confers. For the greater part of their history they have counted as members of the German confederation; for Alsace only became part of France in 1648, and Lorraine was not effectively incorporated in the French monarchy till 1764. And yet, though they have been replaced in their original German connexion, the natives remain French at heart. The explanation is simple. The French Revolution initiated these two provinces into the democratic ideals of the modern world, which the majority of the inhabitants still continue to prefer to the Prussian doctrine of blood and iron and to the methods of the Prussian garrison at Zabern.

The truth is that the quantitative estimate of human values, which plays so large a part in modern political history, is radically false and tends to give a vulgar instead of a liberal and elevated turn to public ambitions. There is no virtue, public or private, which cannot be practised as fully in a small and weak state as under the sceptre of the most formidable tyrant who ever

drove fifty army corps of conscripts to the slaughter. There is no grace of soul, no disinterested endeavour of mind, no pitch of unobtrusive self-sacrifice of which the members of small and pacific communities have not repeatedly shown themselves to be capable. These virtues indeed may be imperilled by lethargy, but they are threatened even more gravely by that absorbing preoccupation with the facts of material power in which the citizens of great empires are inevitably involved.

The great danger of Continental Europe is not revolution but servitude. This war could never have been possible if the intellect of Germany had been really free, if a servile Press supported by a system of State universities had not instilled into the vast mass of the German people ruthless maxims of Caesarism, for the most part repugnant to their real temperament and nature. There are other military autocracies besides Germany, and other countries in which political thought is fettered by the Government. But whatever may be their several shortcomings, the smaller states of Europe are not among the despots. Here at least men may think what they please, and write what they think. Whenever the small states may come up for judgement the advocate of human freedom will plead on their behalf.

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