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THE WAR SPIRIT OF GERMANY

BY

GEORGE M. WRONG

Professor of History in the University of Toronto

CONTENTS

THE LACK OF POLITICAL EDUCATION IN GERMANY

THE GERMAN CONCEPTION OF THE STATE

THE POSITION OF THE ARMY IN GERMANY

THE GERMAN DEMAND FOR NEW TERRITORY

PAN-GERMAN TEACHING AND THE RIGHT TO MAKE
AGGRESSIVE WAR

A DEFECTIVE PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE IN GERMANY

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THE WAR SPIRIT OF GERMANY

1. THE LACK OF POLITICAL EDUCATION IN GERMANY.

Germany is a young state. She is younger even than Canada for the German Empire came into being only in 1871, while the Canadian federation dates from 1867. German civilization is of course old and German society is, in many ways, still feudal in character. The upper classes of Germany are exclusive aristocrats in spirit, scorning to admit social equality with manufacturers and merchants. They have traditions extending back through many centuries. Noble birth counts for much more in Germany than it does in England, though England is still a land of sharp social distinctions. But as a state Germany is young, with the inexperience and the over-confidence of youth. In some aspects even of her culture Germany is young in comparison with such an ancient state as England. Goethe used to say that, had he been born with the language of Chaucer and Shakespeare as his mother tongue, he would not have tried to write poetry for he would have felt that all that he could say had already been said during the long literary history of England. Still Germany, too, has a long record of achievement in the world of thought and art. She produced a Luther and a Dürer before the days of Shakespeare. It is only in political life that she is undeveloped.

2 THE WAR SPIRIT OF GERMANY

This backwardness in political thought and action constitutes one of the tragedies of the history of Germany. In political development Germany is where England stood in the days of Elizabeth. Under Elizabeth, Parliament played but a small part in the life of the nation. True, it met, though sometimes only at intervals of several years, and it had control of the purse and of the making of new laws. But it voted revenues that the sovereign retained through life without further appeal to Parliament, and, since the sovereign usually thought there were already laws enough and desired little change, no new ones were passed for many years at a time. For the rest, the sovereign and the circle surrounding her controlled and spent the revenue; she named whom she would to office, kept up the army and navy, and resisted any attempt by the representatives of the nation to interfere in these things. With slight differences the German Emperor does the same thing to-day. The German people have no more control over the government of Germany than the English people had over that of England in the long distant days before the struggle with Charles I to secure what Elizabeth had always refused to yield.

A stern and bloody fight was necessary before the English people were able to take from their king the control over their own government. There was a long civil war which ended in the dire tragedy of the beheading of the king. England then became a military republic. When this, too, ran its course and fell and the king came back the struggle was still not ended. Charles II ruled much as his despotic father had ruled before him. It required

a new revolution, which drove James II from the throne, to prove that the Parliament and not the king was supreme in England. A century later France went through a similar struggle for the nation's liberty. Years of terrible bloodshed, years of war and tumult, of revolution and renewed revolution, were necessary before the French nation was free to control its own affairs. A word suffices to explain the position of Germany in comparison with these her western neighbors. Her people have not yet struggled through this momentous change in political authority. She is still on the far side of that political valley across which lies the road to self-government. Bismarck and Bülow, early and later German chancellors, alike delight in the truth that Parliament has no control of the government of Germany. The House of Hohenzollern still rules as the Stuarts once ruled in England and as the Bourbons once ruled in France. A great convulsion would be needed to effect a change and it is this convulsion which Europe is passing through at the present moment.

The German people are not free. Let this be written down as the ultimate cause of the great war. We need not suppose that if the German people were free they would rule themselves in any ideal way. Democracies are not ideal. Their rule is sometimes more stupid and ignoble than that of an arrogant despot. But democracies find out sooner or later that they suffer for their own follies, and when they learn wisdom it is the wisdom of the many, a wisdom not easily lost. A despotism, especially the despotism of a class rather than of a single person, is almost certain to think chiefly of

4 THE WAR SPIRIT OF GERMANY

its own interests. The class ruling Germany is the aristocratic class which owns the great landed estates and furnishes the officers who control the army. It is dominant particularly in Prussia. These military squires of Prussia are called Junkers. Germany is a federal state and the Junker is not everywhere supreme in Germany. But his influence is supreme in Prussia and because Prussia is nearly three-fifths of Germany and because the Junkers really control the Prussian King, who is also German Emperor, the Junkers dominate the higher politics and especially the military policy of Germany.

The Junker is landowner and soldier, aristocrat and the scorner of rule by the people. His control of the Prussian Parliament is complete. The Upper House, not greatly unlike the British House of Lords in composition, is entirely in his power. So also is the elected Lower House. Though the vote is freely given in Prussia, the power of the poor voter is not great. The voters in a division are arranged in a list graded from the man placed at the top because he pays the heaviest taxes, to the man at the bottom who pays the lightest. Those who make up the first third of the total amount paid, those who make up the second, and those who make up the third, each choose an equal number of electors and these electors choose the members. Usually less than twenty per cent. of the voters are included in the first two groups. They are the well-to-do as against the poor, and they control absolutely the popular chamber in Prussia. It is as much in the interests of the Junker as is the Upper House. The masses of the people have really no political power. The Junker rules. For

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centuries his class has been accustomed to command, for generations the sword has been the argument by which he has enforced obedience, and to-day, more completely than ever before, he is the master of the resources and of the destinies of Germany.

It is true that Germany has her political campaigns, her elections, her parliaments. It is true that the Junker has had to walk warily at times in face of the rising temper of the nation. But he has led Germany into a disastrous war and he has had the supreme skill to make the German people believe that it is their war and not his. Practically all the agencies which shape the thought of Prussia, at least,—and Prussia is for most political purposes Germany—are under his sway. The schools are taught by persons who have his approval, for the schools are under the control of the government, which he dominates. The same is true of the universities, for the professors are appointed by the state. The vast army in which the young German serves for two or three years is wholly controlled by the Junker class. Even the press in Germany is not really free. The organs of the Social Democrats speak out, indeed, with some freedom in time of peace, but in time of war they are muzzled. No one in Germany, however, who does not wish to be a social outcast is, in any way, identified with the Social Democrats. The skilful use of social pressure, in a society intensely aristocratic in spirit, has enabled the ruling class to direct the political thought of the great majority of Germans. So docile have these been under this teaching that, in foreign affairs and in questions relating to war, what the Junker calls truth they call truth. There has been no system more

absolute over men's minds and bodies since the ages when all Europe listened to the visible Church as the voice of God, thought and acted as the Church directed, and marched away at her command to perish by thousands in trying to save the Holy Land from the unbelievers. The Junker has led the mighty German nation into a new crusade—a crusade to make German civilization, German military rule, the German Emperor's will the master things in all the broad world.

2. THE GERMAN CONCEPTION OF THE STATE.

We need not quarrel with Germany's ambition to be great. It is her right as one of the formative, aggressive, effective forces in the modern world. The Germans believe in a glowing future for their great nation as we believe in one for our own. They believe that their civilization is the highest and best thing that the world has yet produced, as we believe our own is. They believe that their country is in danger from menacing enemies, that they must be strong to protect themselves, and that, in consequence, they must keep up great armed forces. We too believe that we may be menaced and so we keep up the most powerful fleet that the world has ever seen. We may deplore the state of mind that makes the nations nervous about the dangers from each other, but it exists and it is the part of wisdom to make national safety secure. Better days may come, but meanwhile we sleep peacefully because we know we are strong. We need not grudge the Germans the same privileges on the same terms.

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The Germans are unlike us, however, in respect to the control of the great forces which have been created to ensure national safety. In two vital things is this difference the most marked: in the conception of the state, and in the conception of the place of the army in the state. The Germans whose opinion counts have adopted a mystical conception of the state as possessing a being and an authority which stand apart from the individuals, the human units, who make up the nation. To the ordinary simple-minded person the state is just the creation of the people who compose it. At the head of the state, if it is, for instance, the British monarchy, stands the King, the heir of a long family tradition, who now, at any rate, whatever may have been the theory of the past, holds office by virtue of a mandate from Parliament, which represents the British people. The Government which exercises authority is the creation of the will of the people. It is their servant and may be changed at their decree. The state does not stand apart from the people under its authority. It is the people speaking in their collective capacity. Through the government of the state which the people create they direct and control themselves. Vastly different is the theory which prevails in Germany. There the state is not regarded as the creation of the will of the nation. It possesses a being of its own. Its mission is to control and rule, to lead and direct the nation's life, to concentrate its energies, to care for its weak members, to make Germans efficient and powerful. The state is something to be revered and obeyed. From the first day of his entry into school the German youth is taught this need of reverence and

obedience to the state and to the sovereign who stands at its head. He hears the same thing in the university. When he serves in the army he is taught it with a rigour that is certain to leave its permanent impress upon his character. All through life he has evidence of the controlling and directing alertness of the state, a watchful guardian, in no sense his creation, but, on the contrary, his parent and tutor throughout life.

3. THE POSITION OF THE ARMY IN GERMANY.

The German conception of the army, too, is vitally different from the British conception. The British people have usually distrusted a standing army. With a sensitive fear in regard to their own liberties, they have struggled to keep the army always under the control of Parliament and have fixed this principle indelibly upon the British system of government. The British army exists only by the grace of the British Parliament. Each year when Parliament meets it passes what is called an Army Bill. This Bill confers upon the officers of the army the power to exercise authority and to enforce discipline for a year only. If, before the end of each year, the Bill were not renewed the army would cease to exist, for the men would be under no obligation to obey their officers. Thus the power of Parliament over the army is complete. In Prussia, on the other hand, the army has a life separate from the Prussian Parliament and in large measure independent of it. It is inconceivable that an act of the Prussian Parliament, the Landtag, could

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dissolve the Prussian army. It is true that the Prussian Parliament could refuse to vote money for the support of the army. But we know that when, for a number of years after 1862, it refused to vote the cost of extensions in the army planned by Bismarck, he made the extensions and levied the necessary taxes to pay for them without the consent of the Landtag. The Prussian army does not regard itself as the creation of Parliament which the British army certainly is. William II has said over and over again that the basis of the Prussian state is the Prussian army, that upon this foundation his throne rests. An Army Act such as that in force in England would be impossible in Prussia. The army would almost certainly expel a Parliament which tried to bring it into such subjection. To the Prussian the army is a sacred thing. It is prayed for in church immediately after the ruler and before any other organ of government. There is a profound reverence for the uniform. The officer dominates Prussian society. Everywhere he is the darling of social aspirants. In the streets every one is expected to give way before his proud progress in the midst of the multitude.

All the world laughed in 1906 when a Berlin cobbler, Wilhelm Voigt, took an amusing advantage of this reverence for the uniform. Of Voigt's fifty-seven years, twenty-seven had been spent under sentence as a criminal. Tall, grey-haired, with stooping shoulders and bow legs, a quite disreputable-looking person with bleary eyes and hands stained by the work of his calling, Voigt was not of the type, one would suppose, to succeed in the assumed rôle of a swaggering Prussian Captain. He had never

served in the army. He bought, in an old clothes shop, the uniform of a captain of the first foot guards. He knew that it is a rule of the Prussian army that private soldiers not in command of an officer of their own must obey the requisition of any officer. Having arrayed himself as a Captain he went out in Berlin, met two separate groups of soldiers, making up ten in all, and ordered them to fall in and accompany him to the railway station. Here he and his squad took the train for Köpenick, an industrial city of some 30,000 inhabitants, about ten miles from Berlin. On arriving, he drew up the men on the railway platform, gave them a thunderous command to fix bayonets, and then led them through the streets to the Town Hall. He placed soldiers at the two entrances, took two grenadiers in with him, banged open the door of the Mayor's office and demanded to know of the scared official whether he was the Mayor of Köpenick. The Mayor, awed by the Captain, replied meekly that he was. "Then you are my prisoner," said the Captain, "and I have his Majesty's order to send you to Berlin at once." When the Mayor said, "I should like to see the order for my arrest," the Captain replied fiercely, "These soldiers are my warrant." To the Mayor's wife the Captain was gracious and said that it was a sign of the esteem in which the Mayor was held that an officer of the rank of Captain should have been sent to arrest him. The lady was allowed to accompany her husband, he promised to make no effort to escape, and the couple were sent off to Berlin in a carriage with an armed grenadier on the box. The Captain then went to the room of the Treasurer, ordered him sternly to hand over the money (some

four thousand marks) in hand, gave him a receipt for it, and promptly sent him, too, in a carriage to Berlin in charge of two grenadiers with fixed bayonets. The Captain himself then went to the railway station, carrying the impounded money, and forthwith disappeared. Within a few hours all Berlin was laughing at the hoax. The cobbler was soon arrested and those who saw him could hardly believe that a broken-down old reprobate could have imposed upon so many. It only illustrated the unquestioning obedience and reverence of the Prussian for the uniform.

4. THE GERMAN DEMAND FOR NEW TERRITORY.

A nation that prides itself on being the greatest military power in the world must be finding ever new achievements for its army. The army which William I and Bismarck made formidable by the violation of the Prussian constitution during the three or four years prior to 1866 was certainly not wanting in heavy tasks. It defeated Denmark in 1864; it shattered the military power of Austria in a brief campaign in 1866 and drove that power out of Germany; gathering its strength for a new advance, it conquered France in 1870-71. Thus in six brief years this great creation, mastered by the spirit of Bismarck and Moltke, won a succession of brilliant campaigns with few parallels in the history of the world. What further tasks should the German army face? Bismarck's thought was that Germany should carry on no more wars unless she were herself attacked. France, embittered by defeat and by the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, was the unre-

lenting enemy of Germany and was waiting for the day of vengeance. Bismarck thought that if France was occupied elsewhere she would long less for this dread day. So he encouraged France's ambitions for a colonial dominion, supported her by German diplomacy and urged her, as far as he could, to keep her eyes fixed elsewhere than on those passages in the Vosges mountains beyond which lay her lost provinces. For Germany Bismarck desired no colonies. Her task was to make secure the great state which he had helped to create; there was danger, he thought, in expansion overseas. To the military class, however, Bismarck's policy seemed defective. If Germany was to play her due part in the world she must offer to her forces ever new labours which should justify the keeping up of a mighty army and, in the long run, the building of a great fleet.

Out of this situation came the German longing for new territory, for a world dominion that should rival and in the end surpass that held by Britain. The indifference to colonial power which had been strong, even in Britain, between 1860 and 1880, gave way in Germany to a longing for enlarged dominions, for possessions overseas where secure markets could be built up. We need not discuss here whether colonies and dependencies to be won by rapid conquest would prove a source of strength or of weakness to the German state. It only matters that the Germans found themselves in the position of a younger son to whom had come but a small share of the inheritance of past ages. It is certain that Britain was the eldest son and that she held what the eldest son holds under the law of primogeniture, the vast

accumulations in land which had been built up by centuries of labour. The inheritance was not acquired by greed and trickery. It was won as the result of successful war, of enterprise and daring, of efficiency, of the capacity to rule justly and to make content peoples less developed socially and politically than those of Britain. In America she won Canada by the sword, by protracted fighting against a brave enemy who was beaten in the end. In Asia she won India by commercial enterprise, by her power to preserve order, by her toleration and her justice. She had a long, stern fight to hold and extend her dominion in Africa. Australia she won by good luck, in part, for she planted her flag there before any other European state claimed that neglected continent. The long and complex record of her growth is an honourable story, on the whole, and the best evidence of the justice and liberty which are secure under her flag is the content of the varied peoples of her vast estate. Goodly indeed is the inheritance thus built up. Germany, young as a great state, a new-comer among the nations, cast eyes of envy on this mighty dominion. Prince von Bülow has said that the Germans are by nature prone to envy, and in time there grew up a passionate resentment in the nation which had inherited so little, against the nation, which had inherited so much. This led to a resolve that the time must come when the younger son should be no longer without his great share of the good things.

Step by step there was evolved in Germany a frame of mind that made war inevitable in the end. The more moderate German opinion fixed upon a theory of the compensations due to Germany by

her neighbours. Professor Delbrück, the successor of Treitschke in the Chair of Modern History in the University of Berlin, was visiting a friend in England shortly before the outbreak of the war. One day Delbrück startled his host by saying that England owed Germany compensations. "Compensations for what?" asked the startled Englishman. Then the German professor explained his theory. Britain owed compensations for the great realm which she held, compensations for Canada, for India, for Australia, for South Africa. It was not said that Britain should hand over any of these dominions to Germany but it was distinctly asserted that it was Britain's duty, if not to help, certainly not to oppose Germany's designs to acquire territory that should tend to make her dominions equal to those of Britain. Now it happens that all the territory of the earth has been appropriated by some one. The theory thus meant that Britain should stand by quietly while Germany seized territory that should give her a world-wide empire.

We need not deny that Germany's desire for a great territory is natural and that a prudent statesmanship was not called upon to oppose all her ambitions. In truth Britain has not blocked Germany's way to great acquisitions. Britain has had command of the sea and could at any time have checked German effort overseas. But she has not done so. With her consent Germany had acquired great territories in Africa. Germany had also seized territory in China and established there a sphere of influence. She had acquired islands in the Pacific. True these are not the choice spots of the earth, but the fact remains that, at any time, with

comparatively little danger to herself, Britain might have checked Germany's designs. She has even shown a certain willingness to give Germany a free hand in taking the leading part in developing the desolated but fertile areas of Asia Minor, held back by the ruinous policy of the Turk. Germany wanted British benevolence to go farther. The time came when she demanded, in menacing terms addressed to France, that she should be allowed to take a great part of Morocco. It was a point where she could build up a fortress-port that should imperil British communications by sea with South Africa. War became finally certain when, in 1911, Britain gave a stern check to these ambitions of Germany and threw all her weight to the support of France's claims in that region. The doctrine of compensations made Germany feel that she was robbed of her just due and that Britain was a selfish enemy which must some day be crushed.

5. PAN-GERMAN TEACHING AND THE RIGHT TO MAKE AGGRESSIVE WAR.

The theory of compensations is, however, the most moderate of the German demands for territory. Pan-Germanism takes a much wider sweep. At the basis of Pan-Germanism is the belief in the superiority of the Teutons, as such, over other races. The English are a Teutonic race and some Englishmen have urged Teutonic superiority quite as keenly as have German writers. The late Professor Freeman, for instance, insisted so vehemently upon the superiority of the Teuton over the Celt that it was

jestingly declared by one of his friends that Freeman believed even the cattle in Teutonic Normandy to be finer than those of Celtic Brittany! The theories of Freeman and others were looked upon in England as amiable speculations. In England theories find a corrective in the free play of political forces and, when over-drawn, are usually laughed down. In Germany, however, the theorist has fewer checks and is taken more seriously by a large number of people. The Pan-German speculations, fantastic though they seem, have been taken up as a political policy. The Pan-German League aims at making Germany dominant over the whole world. It teaches that no other race has produced a civilization equal to that of the Germans. So beautiful is this culture that it should prevail everywhere for the world's own highest interest. The Germans can and ought to rule the world. The German race is not yet united. The Rhine, for instance, is a German river. But its mouth is held by the Dutch, a German race, not yet absorbed into the German state. This union must be effected, voluntarily, if the Dutch so will, but, whatever their attitude, it must be effected. In Belgium, too, are many persons of German origin—the Flemings—and Belgium must become a part of Germany. So must Northern France, which has many people of Teutonic blood. Scandinavia and England shall be included. "The greatness and good of the world," said Professor von Treitschke, "are to be found in the predominance of the German culture, the German mind, in a word, of the German character."

These theories fitted in delightfully with the military ambitions of the Prussian Junker. Under his inspiring lead the appetite for world mastery took on ever more startling aspects. France should be reduced to impotence and Germany should take a great stretch of her territory reaching from the English Channel to the Mediterranean. It was even declared by extremists that to make this great area thoroughly German the millions of French inhabitants should be expelled. When Germany should dominate all western Europe, she would be strong enough to settle accounts with the Russian Slav who should be held in a subordinate position on the plains of Russia. Germany should dominate South-Eastern Europe, she should reach the Adriatic, the Aegean Sea, the Bosphorus, Constantinople. She should cross to Asia, master Asia Minor and reach across Mesopotamia to the very borders of India. Much of Africa, too, she should have. All the world should sit obediently at her feet.

German statecraft is thought by many to have been incredibly stupid in bringing on war against too heavy odds. German diplomacy was, indeed, ill-informed. The German lacks the constructive imagination and the sympathy which would enable him to appreciate the point of view of outsiders. But if the German leaders have failed in understanding the outside world they have not failed to understand and to lead their own people. They have appealed to every class in Germany. To those of military tastes has been preached the doctrine that war is the great preservative of the spirit of a nation, that struggle is the law of life, and that the survival of the fittest is nature's eternal reward

to those who fight and conquer. A nation without arms, a nation that will settle its claims by an appeal to arbitration and to the merely legal aspects of political issues, is a nation unworthy of leadership in the world. To live in any vital sense is to press on into new paths, to embark on new creations. If there is to be no appeal to force, if legal rights are to prevail, instead of the strong arm, the world would remain stereotyped forever as it stands now and the weak would not suffer the just penalty of their own degeneration. For those not likely to approve of aggressive war there was another type of argument. The fatherland was in danger. The Russian Slav had mastered northern Europe and crossed Asia until he had reached the Pacific. There he had met with a rebuff at the hands of the Japanese. Baulked in Asia he was the more resolved to return to aggression in Europe. He had long kept an eye on a pathway to the south, that should lead to Constantinople, and had begun again to make colossal preparations for mastering South-Eastern Europe. Victor there against Germany's ally, Austria, he would, in the end, turn upon Germany herself and she would be forced back out of East Prussia and Posen. If Germany was to check these designs no time should be lost, for Russia was recovering rapidly from her humiliation by Japan and would soon be ready to win new victories that should wipe out the memory of old defeats. The German leaders thus had an argument for every class. Those who wanted war were encouraged to make it ; while those who wished peace were told that it could be had only after Russia was defeated. Thus when war broke out the Germans were unani-

mous in the belief that they were fighting for their existence and must strike ruthlessly or be crushed.

Germany has elaborated her own philosophy of war and holds herself responsible to no outside power, either to explain or to excuse her methods. Clausewitz, the father of modern German military theories (he died in 1831), said that the one rule to observe in war is to win, that war has no law except the law of the strongest, that the worst dangers in war are the dangers which spring from benevolence, and that the vanquished in war are the property of the victor, to be disposed of as he may see fit. More than three generations of German soldiers have been reared in these theories. German officers have been indoctrinated with the teaching that the spirit of an opponent must be crushed by overwhelming and remorseless methods. The world at large believed that when at war Germany would consider herself bound by conventions agreed to at the Hague, but the world has had a rude awakening. Germany has fallen back at once upon the doctrine of Clausewitz that there are no laws of war except the will of the strong and, as far as she is concerned, international law as applied to war has ceased to exist.

Political education involves education in restraint. The man educated in politics learns respect for the opinions of others, respect for the varying aspirations which are imbedded in human nature. The soldier represents a type of character ennobled by courage, self-sacrifice, obedience, and supreme devotion to duty. The soldier in the rôle of statesman has, however, not often proved a success, for the soldier estimates life in terms of strength to meet an enemy,

while the statesman thinks chiefly of the problems that spring from man's relations to man in a well-ordered society, of economic prosperity, of the play of political forces. The rulers of Germany had had almost none of the chastening which comes to those who must reckon with the political power of the multitude. Victorious Germany could not be checked, her leaders thought. They came, indeed, to despise the power of other states, for they saw that no one of these equalled Germany in concentrating thought and resources on the problems of war. Conscious of strength they thought that all other states feared to confront in arms so efficient and terrible a foe. England in particular was, they could see, not, as they were, a nation of soldiers, and they came to despise her much as the soldier despises the fighting capacity of the civilian. Contempt leads to arrogance and over-confidence, and Germany became impregnated with these vices. Other defects too, her leaders matured. During a state of war many precepts of social morality are suspended. You may practise deceit and trickery in war, you may seize and destroy property, you may burn and kill, and at the same time feel no sense of guilt in appealing to the judgment of high Heaven. The methods of Germany show that her leaders, pondering ever the conditions which should prevail during war, allowed their political plans to be dominated by the ethical code of war.

6. A DEFECTIVE PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE IN GERMANY.

The ruthless theory of war found, in truth, its complement in a theory of life. The last forty years have been years of disintegration in respect to religious faith. It may be said that they have witnessed both the strengthening and the weakening of the hopes and the restraints that we associate with Christianity. The limitation of scientific knowledge to a succession of observed phenomena, the inadequacy of this knowledge to satisfy the cravings of the affections, the hope of immortality, in spite of the universality of death, these and a hundred other aspects of life have drawn men unsatisfied from the well-defined realms of science to regions with more shadowy boundaries, the reality of which can be apprehended only by a vital faith. A tender mysticism has been one result of the disappointments of science, and a new emphasis has been given to the old demand that men must believe in order to be saved. But the concentration of thought upon the material problems with which science deals has also produced an exactly opposite effect. It has led men to think that this world which can be touched and felt is the sole real world and that the only vital problems of life are the problems of material dominion.

The two tendencies are vividly illustrated in modern Germany. Bismarck had a mystical faith and a profound sense of responsibility to God. Once, as Busch, his biographer, tells us, Bismarck burst out with the question, "Why should I serve these Hohenzollerns? My ancestry is as good as

theirs." Then he gave the answer himself : It was because the Hohenzollerns were called of God to rule the Prussian state. Busch has given us another significant outburst of Bismarck. The old statesman was at his country seat at Varzin. One night he sat before an open fire meditating aloud and in despondent vein about his own career. He had seen his country involved in three great wars. In them eighty thousand men had gone to their death. True, as a result Germany had been united. But had he made the Germans happy ? Had happiness come to himself or to his family from all this dire slaughter and misery ? Then he declared the conviction which quieted his conscience and gave him peace : "But I have settled all that with God." Everything, Bismarck believed, had to be settled with God and because this was true neither aggressive nor preventive war could be justified. The issues of war were in God's hands, they were to man's wisdom uncertain, and, in consequence, the only war that could be defended was the war forced upon a nation by an aggressive assailant.

There is reason to believe that this temper, this fear of God's power to foil the aggressor, has died out of the ruling counsels of Germany. The German Emperor, it is true, has the name of God on his lips. But his God he nearly always describes as the God of Battles, the God of Battles who gives victory to the strong. There is little in the utterances of German statesmen of the present day to show that either responsibility to God or belief that their sovereign rules by divine right has much place in their thoughts. The divine right of the Hohenzollerns to rule Prussia is deeply imbedded in its

history, but that of the German Emperor to rule Germany is, in truth, an absurd theory, for all the world knows that he rules as the president of a federal state under the written clauses of a constitution which dates only from the year 1871. German leaders of to-day are not thinking of divine right. They have been bred, for the most part, in quite another school of thought. There is little evidence of any touch of mystical faith in their outlook. The old Prussia, with its ties between king and people sanctified by a long past, has become the new Germany, young, ambitious, more resolved on creating new precedents than on reverencing the traditions of the past. If any one needs persuasion on this point let him contrast the self-revelations of the first Chancellor, Bismarck, with those of the last Chancellor but one, Bülow. Bismarck is full of a passionate faith ; Bülow is cold, adroit, cynical, the manipulator of merely human or material forces. For twenty-five years a destructive philosophy has been taught in Germany. It despises weakness ; it glorifies strength and power ; and the Prussian Junker has drunk it in eagerly. It pervades the thought of General von Bernhardt, whose books may be regarded as the expression of the outlook of the Junker class.

We associate this philosophy with the name of Nietzsche, and he is, indeed, its most brilliant exponent. But its roots are deeper than in the influence of any one man. They are in human nature itself. It is as true that our characters shape our theory of life as it is that our theory of life shapes our characters. The Prussian Junker who went to the university, his mind dominated

by the conception that military strength is the supreme goal of statecraft, was certain to drink in teaching, propounded with all the authority of an accepted philosophy of life, that the old moralities which protect the weak are no longer valid and that the true morality is the morality of valour, that the strong have the right, decreed by nature herself, to master and enforce their will upon the weak. Nietzsche, who died in 1900, was no preacher of the greatness of Germany, and no upholder of the fantastic ideals of the German Emperor. Nietzsche was the apostle of the higher culture in which, as it seemed to him, Germany was wholly lacking. He taught what has been called aristocratic radicalism. The conceived tradition of democracy that political wisdom is to be found in majorities is, he said, a degrading lie; the majority are foolish; only the few are wise. Men are not equal; they are elaborately unequal and wisdom and power rest only with the capable. Nietzsche turned with bitter scorn on Christianity. Its teaching of the duty to preserve and protect the weak, the unfit, the halt and the maimed, runs counter, he said, to the decree of Nature, which eliminates the inefficient and preserves only the strong. Under Christian influence a morality, which, he said, has become a superstition, has been built up, in order to protect the weak. This morality, teaching for instance the sin of theft, of taking from the weak the property which they have not the strength to defend, is only the outcome of custom, and has no authority other than that of custom. A new custom would create a new morality. If there is to be progress old customs must be broken down and new ones must be

created. Thus, according to Nietzsche, all advance is due to what the world calls crime. Those who have insight and strength see the futility and inefficiency that are due to the old custom. They break with it and establish a new order. Their right is the right which their power confers. It is the efficient, not the weak or those who are protected by outworn customs, the so-called morality, who have the authority to master and to rule men.

Thus the philosophy of Nietzsche. Probably the great majority of Germans never heard of him. But the teaching fitted in with the frame of mind of the class which ruled Prussia, and, through it, Germany, and there is evidence that it became their Gospel. Nor was the teaching new in anything but the brilliant, paradoxical, and eccentric phrasing in which it was expressed by the wayward genius of Nietzsche. The teaching is in Clausewitz. War, taught Clausewitz, is only one of the weapons of political policy, one means by which national ideals are made effective. It takes no thought of rights. It sweeps away International Law which, to use the phrase of Clausewitz, "is hardly worth mentioning." The strong have the right to become masters and the weak must submit.

7. BRITISH UNITY TO MEET AGGRESSION.

With these ideas dominant in Germany, war was inevitable, sooner or later, and, in the long run, it was certain to be war with Britain. This is not the place to discuss the particular incidents which resulted in the great war. Any other set of incidents

would have had the same result at whatever time Germany should think opportune for herself. It does not speak well for the insight of her statesmen that they should have allowed the war to come in circumstances which kept Italy neutral, instead of joining Germany, and brought Britain to the side of France and Russia. We may doubt whether Bismarck would have taken any chances of this kind. It is apparently true that in modern Germany there is no statesman of commanding genius. Germany has brought four great powers, Russia, France, Britain and Japan, together as her foes in war ; she has violated the neutrality of Belgium, a helpless and unoffending state, and has thus caused an intense public opinion against herself in the United States and other neutral countries ; she has waged war by methods that have destroyed, as far as she is concerned, the whole promising fabric of international law. These are achievements due not to political genius but to political madness. Democracies are not always or even usually wise, but even a democracy, which had only the elements of political education, could hardly have proved so defiant, for there is an instinct in a democrat that makes him feel his responsibilities as a citizen of the world. Here once more is written large the tragedy of Germany's lack of political training.

If Germany has as yet done little to educate herself in politics she has unconsciously done much to educate and mature British imperialism. The democracies of Greater Britain were in danger of concentrating their thought on purely local issues, of being content to enjoy a smug prosperity, and of leaving the mother land to solve alone the problems

incident to her great position in the world. It is Germany which has raised with acute reality the whole range of questions that may be summed up under the head of imperial unity. These questions have not been solved; as yet they have only come under discussion. The growth of the German fleet raised the question of naval defence for all parts of the British Empire. Everywhere there was keen debate on the issues involved in the crisis. In remote villages of Canada and Australia, where political thought had hitherto scarcely ranged beyond railways and tariffs, the problems of world-wide Empire began to be debated. Village Miltons wrote poems on the British fleet; village Hampdens grew passionate on the theme that Britons should stand together in all parts of the world to support the traditions of British liberty. Germany had started an educational movement of which no man can yet foresee the final fruits. The war is bringing rapidly to a head the meaning of these forces. The writer has just seen in military parade on the spacious lawns of the University of Toronto nearly two thousand undergraduates, all training for military service. They are the flower of the life of Canada and they are as keen and eager as are citizens in the mother land to face the trial with which all Britain is confronted. The spirit thus aroused in the youth of a nation can never again be narrowed so as to be content with village patriotism. Germany is educating the whole British Empire by forcing its citizens to ponder as a unit the problems of their security and destiny.