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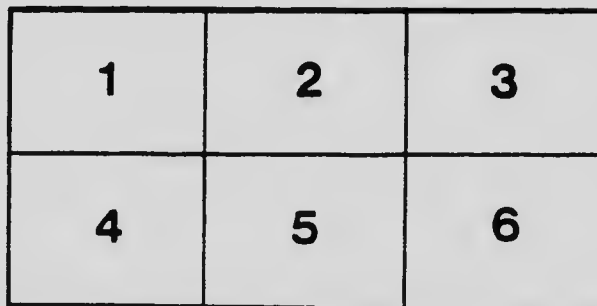
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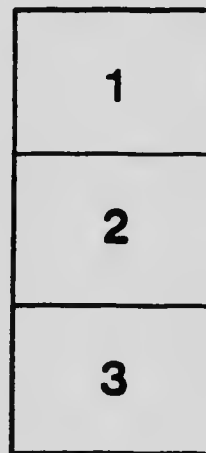
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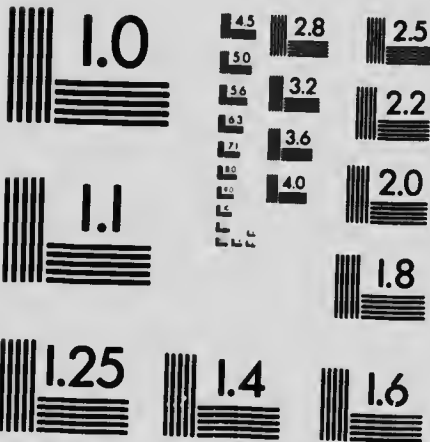
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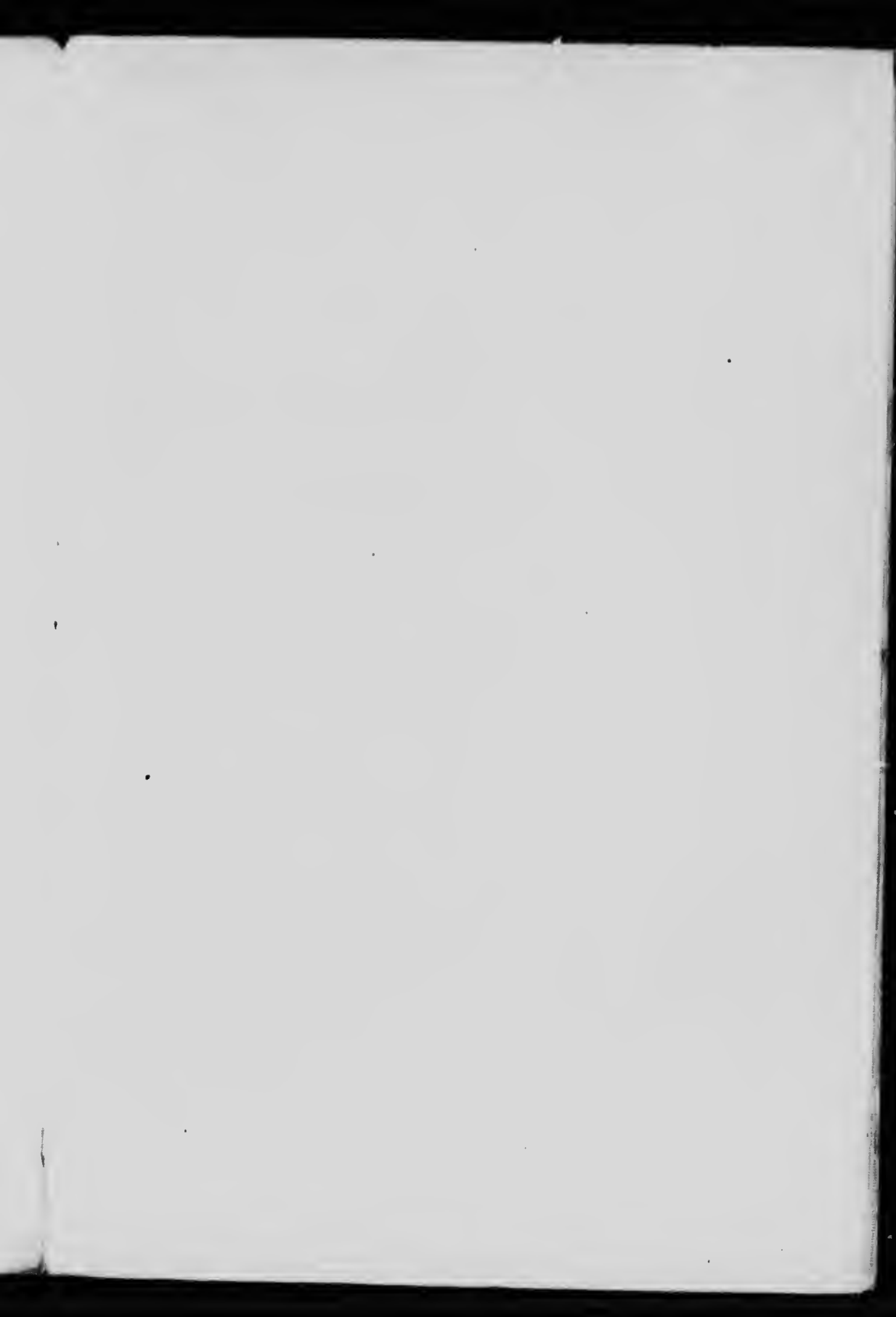
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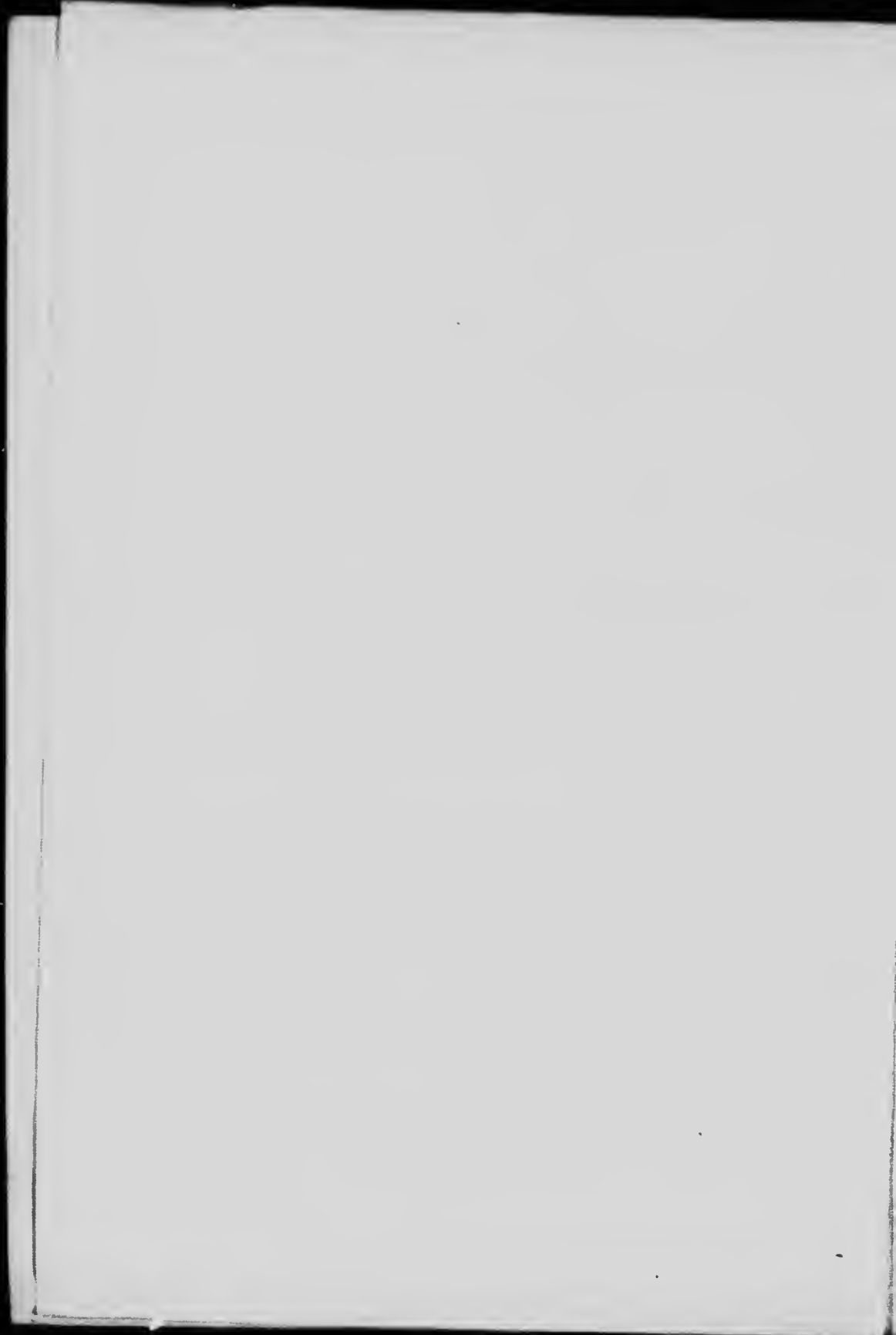
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No. 1

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1914

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THE DEEPER CAUSES  
OF THE WAR

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By Dr. SANDAY

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## THE DEEPER CAUSES OF THE WAR

IN this vast and portentous war the remarkable thing is how little definite grievance the combatants have against each other. This fact may be taken as proof that it has all been deliberately planned. One step has seemed to follow from another by a kind of horrible logic. And yet only in the first step of all can there be said to have been anything like real provocation. Even for that satisfaction was offered, but refused, and refused in a way which showed that it was never intended that it should be accepted. So clear has this logical sequence been that opinion all the world over has had no difficulty in tracing the course of events to its real, if somewhat concealed, origin. We all know where the real responsibility lies. We know who is the true aggressor.

It certainly was not this country. Its statesmen have taken a foremost part in working for peace. The record lies open to the world, and the world has pronounced upon it. No one could have worked for peace more sincerely and genuinely than our own Foreign Secretary; and in all that he said or did, he has had the whole nation behind him.

It was not France who wanted war. By common consent, France has shown throughout excellent moderation and self-restraint. It is true that France has all along had a strong and deep-seated motive for war. The French have never forgotten that dismemberment of their country which befell them three-and-forty years ago. But, though they have always been thinking

of it, they have kept their own resolve never to speak of it. The issues for them were too tremendous. They knew that it would be for them a struggle for life and death.

I do not think that Russia desired war, though it also did not shrink from it. The motive with Russia was its strong sense of nationality and its leadership of the Slavonic race. It advised Servia to accept the ultimatum presented to it, and I believe that it would have stopped its preparations if a hand had really been held up to it on the other side.

Though at first nominally on the side of peace, the language and action of Germany alone were evasive and ambiguous. In the correspondence with our own Foreign Minister her intentions were gradually disclosed. And gradually it became more and more clear that these intentions substantially agreed with a programme drawn up in her name, though, of course, not openly avowed, and published between two and three years ago. I refer to a book, to which frequent reference has been made in these last weeks, by a general highly placed in the German Army. The title was *Germany and the Next War*, and the author, General von Bernhardi. It was an extremely frank book, very serious and sober, but also very uncompromising. The principal question about it was how far it truly represented the ideas which guided German policy. There was no doubt that it represented the views of a powerful party in the German Army, but the question was how far it also represented the Government and the nation.

By this time I think it has become clear that it really did represent the deliberate underlying policy of Germany as a whole.

Let me try, if I can, to explain what I believe to have

been the true condition of things. I believe that the natural attitude and aims of a large part of the nation are by no means identical with those of the military party. I believe that great numbers of Germans are quiet, peace-loving people, quite prepared to live on good terms with their neighbours on all sides. But the more aggressive party has been making strong and energetic efforts for a number of years to get the upper hand, to obtain a decisive control of the course of public policy. Even the Emperor himself, strong character as he is, has been all along more or less under the influence of this party. There are really two sides to his nature. I do not think that the personal advances which he has made to this country have been at all hypocritical. He has been, I think, quite disposed to be friendly with us; and his connexion with our own Royal Family has not counted for nothing. But the preponderating influence has been on the other side. It has always appealed to the energy and force that were natural to him. It should always be remembered that he is before all things a patriot. His one ruling desire has always been to promote the welfare and greatness of his people. And when he thought of greatness, it was natural that military greatness should have the strongest attraction for him. Hence I think we can understand how the military party has gradually increased its hold upon him until it has at last carried him along with it. And in like manner I believe that it has carried along with it the nation, not entirely, and not whole-heartedly, but enough to determine the drift of purpose and policy. There is no country in which education counts for so much; and the strongest voices in education have for some time past been on the aggressive side. The gospel of Militarism and of Force has been preached without

intermission. It has converted some, and silenced others, and, with or without their real assent, carried away all.

This policy is really at bottom Prussian rather than German. But Prussia is at present the dominant power in Germany, and it has succeeded in impressing its spirit upon the whole nation.

The fact is that, when all disguises are stripped away, this Prussianized Germany stands upon the old naked doctrine that Might is Right. Never in the history of the world has this doctrine been applied in such a systematically logical way. Not only is the right of the stronger vindicated and excused after the event; but strength is laid down as the ultimate principle on which right is based. Wherever, in the actual condition of things, the rights of possession do not exactly correspond to the strength of the possessor, it is assumed that they are hollow and ought not to be respected. Stated in its bare form, the doctrine goes back to

the good old rule, the simple plan,  
That they should take who have the power,  
And they should keep who can.

With this assumption firmly fixed at the back of its mind, Germany has come to be profoundly discontented with the existing state of things in Europe and in the world at large. It believes that other nations—notably ourselves—have possessions far in excess of their deserts, while Germany itself deserves and needs far more than it has. ‘Are we to acquiesce,’ the Germans are represented as asking—‘Are we to acquiesce in England’s possession of one-fifth of the globe, with no title-deeds, no claim, except priority in robbery?’ (Cramb, *Germany and England*, p. 106). It is true that

we have a large empire of colonies and dependencies, and that France has a considerable empire of the same kind, while Germany's share appears to be small and inadequate. This hunger for possessions on the earth's surface is of comparatively recent growth. It has been steadily increasing during the last five-and-twenty years. It should be remembered that Bismarck did not desire colonial expansion. That was one of the points on which he differed from the young Kaiser. It is instructive to follow the process of development. The first thing that Germany desired was unity. It had been handicapped in the past by its territorial divisions. It was a very legitimate and worthy aim to get rid of these divisions. The work was done in a masterful and impressive way. It was only natural that with the consciousness of unity there should come also a consciousness of strength, and the desire to assert that strength in paying off old scores and establishing a German Empire on firm foundations. Hence the Franco-German War, from which Germany seemed to have gained much that it wanted. But it very soon came to be disappointed with the result. France recovered, with remarkable and unexpected rapidity, and still continued to be a formidable rival. The determination gradually grew to fight out this battle again and the next time—this time—to fight it to a finish. There is abundant and overwhelming evidence of this determination. General von Bernhardt lays it down in plain words :

‘ In one way or another we must settle accounts with France if we are to gain elbow-room for our own world-policy. That is the first and most absolute requirement of a sound German policy ; and inasmuch as French hostility is not to be removed once for all

by pacific means, that must be done by force of arms. France must be so completely overthrown that it will never get in our way again.' (*Der nächste Krieg*, p. 114 ; *E. T.*, p. 105.)

If that is not sufficiently clear, another passage will make it clearer :

'As in 1870-71 we forced our way to the coasts of the Atlantic Ocean, so this time too we must aim at a thorough conquest in order to possess ourselves of the French naval ports and to destroy the French marine dépôts. It would be a war to the knife which we should have to fight out with France, a war which—if it succeeded—would crush for ever the position of France as a great Power.' (*Ibid.*, p. 187 ; *E. T.*, p. 165.)

The destruction of France was to be only a stepping-stone to our own. The stress laid on the possession of the French naval harbours was significant. They were certainly to be used as a base of operations against ourselves. We, too, were to be crushed, by sea as well as by land.

Our statesmen have from time to time made proposals for naval disarmament or at least reduced construction. But, however well intentioned these proposals may have been, they were only irritating to those to whom they were addressed ; because they always went upon the assumption that we should retain our relative superiority—in other words that we should keep the command of the sea ; and it was just the command of the sea which the Germans were resolved to challenge. They did not say so in so many words ; but that was what they meant. It was only a question of time.

The present war is the outcome on the part of the Germans of an immense and deep-seated consciousness



of strength—a consciousness of strength, not only actual but potential, and even more potential than actual. It was not only that they knew that they had the big battalions; that they knew that these battalions were admirably drilled and organized; that they knew that the whole nation was fully prepared for war. It was not only this—but they also knew that the nation had the spirit and the courage, the energy and the resolution for war. They knew that it was prepared to make enormous sacrifices. They meant to show the whole world what they could do; and what they would do in the way of brilliant achievements after the war was finished—when the German flag floated alone over the ruins of an independent Europe.

It must be confessed that there was a certain grandeur in these ambitions. They rested not only on the consciousness of strength but on the consciousness of virtue—the consciousness of possessing a particular group of warlike virtues—the stern self-discipline, the thrift, the persistence and self-devotion, which had raised Prussia in spite of her poor and barren soil to be the foremost of German states, and which just a hundred years ago had animated the German Army in the great War of Liberation from the Napoleonic tyranny. The Germans think—and not wholly without reason—that neither we nor the French, in our acquisition of empire, have shown virtues such as these.

When they speak of 'the justice of their cause', that is what they mean. They think that we stand in their way, and prevent them from obtaining that which is their due. They think that we are decadent, and enervated by long peace; and they are determined to wrest from us this empire of which we are not worthy.

That is our enemies' case—not what they say on the surface, but what they really think in their hearts. As I have said, there would be something grandiose about it, if we could grant the assumptions on which it is founded. But I need not say that we utterly refuse to grant them. Might is not right, or in any true sense the foundation of right. We believe that this war is a great and grievous wrong in the sight of God and in the sight of man. We believe that it is not only a great and grievous wrong but also that it is a huge miscalculation. We believe the Germans will find that they have to some extent misjudged themselves, and that to a yet greater extent they have misjudged other nations. But all this remains to be put to the test, and is in the hands of God. In the meantime our first duty is to weigh calmly and to try to understand.

There are three books that I would earnestly recommend any one who desires to do this to read—or at least two out of the three. They are all published at popular prices, 2s. or 2s. 6d. each. The first is the book of General von Bernhardt's to which I have referred. This, however, is the longest of the three books, and may perhaps most easily be dispensed with. An English book which has come out within the last few days is much shorter and will answer the same purpose even more effectually. It is called *Germany and England*, and the writer, Mr. J. A. Cramb, was Professor of Modern History at Queen's College, London, but died before his book was finished. He had had much of his training in Germany, and was a convert to the German idea, which he expounds with fire and force. He makes himself the mouthpiece of the German accusations against us; and it must be confessed that a great deal of this part of the book is very bitter reading. But that does not mean that he

has lost all faith in his own country. Some sides of its history he keenly appreciated. He was really an Imperialist, and it was from the side of Imperialism that the German ideas had their fascination for him. He foresaw clearly the coming conflict, though he did not live to see it. It gripped him with the force of a tremendous tragedy. His book raises in its acutest form the whole question of the comparative moral value of Peace and War.

The third book is the one that I think will give the most dispassionate and balanced view of the whole issue from a European standpoint. The title is *The Anglo-German Problem*, and the writer, Dr. Charles Sarolea, is a Belgian publicist, who is at present acting as correspondent of one of our own morning papers. He is highly intelligent and well informed ; and he writes with some detachment, but as an interested and friendly observer, who understands what Britain really means and stands for, and he refutes the attacks that are made upon her with equal lucidity and moderation.

There is other work to be done besides that of our sailors on the sea and our soldiers in the field. There are many and great problems that press upon us more urgently than ever before. And those of us who are called in any degree to deal with them will need hardly less than the fighting line the continual help and guidance of Almighty God.



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