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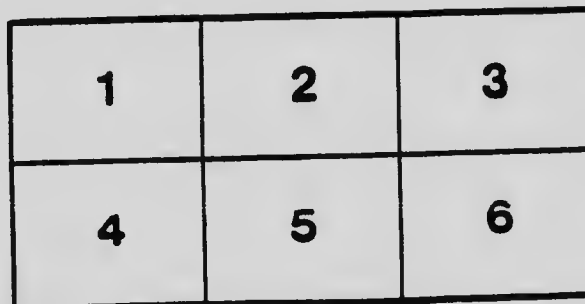
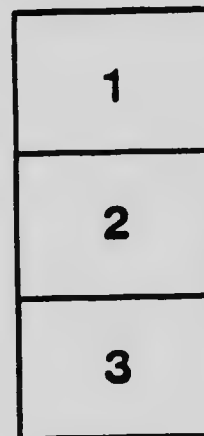
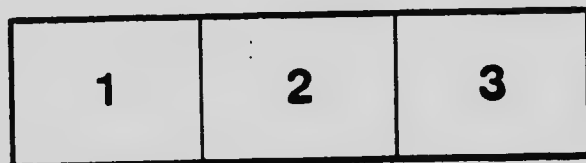
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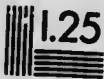
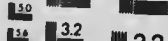
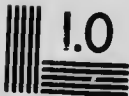
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The War and Its Origin

BY

W. PETERSON

Reprinted from the University Magazine,
December, 1914

THE WAR AND ITS ORIGIN

OUR absorption in the incidents and our concern over the issue of the tragic drama which is now being enacted in Europe tend to lessen our interest in the causes, direct and indirect, that brought about the war. And even with the evidence now before us a complete history cannot yet be written. Disclosures have still to be made, and it may well be that fifty years hence memoirs of some of the chief personages will see the light from which the world will learn interesting and important facts that now lie hid from view. But it is none the less incumbent on each and all of us to be able to give, according to our lights, a reason for the faith that is in us. We have not been suffering, on the British side at least, from any megalomania or war fever, nor have we acted on unreasoning impulse. With us it is not a case of "my country, right or wrong." But we are fortunate, all the same, in feeling that nothing could have happened that was better calculated to bind together so instantaneously and so effectively the somewhat ill-compacted fabric of our Empire. Certain negligible incidents in South Africa have not marred the picture: they have only set it in a stronger light. Is it possible, then, that the unanimity which has inspired our action can leave room for anything to be said on the other side?

Of course there always is another side. We are quite accustomed, in private life, to find two sane, sober, and sensible persons differing materially in the view they take of the same set of facts and phenomena. And when children quarrel, we sometimes see them rushing at each other so impetuously that both tact and strength are needed to pull them away and calm their surging spirits. For the time being they have lost their heads. That is what has happened to the nations of Europe—in more senses than one! It all

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came so suddenly that there was no time even for a quiet talk.

Only a few weeks before the outbreak of the war, a brilliant celebration was held in the little university town of Groningen, in Holland, where many British marines and other prisoners are now interned. It was a really international gathering, of a kind that will be very rare indeed for many years to come. Representatives were gathered together from most of the great universities of the world. In their presence, and in the hearing also of Queen Wilhelmina, the "Rector Magnificus" reminded us of how his university had been founded to take up the work of Louvain and Tournay, in the days when, three hundred years ago, the Dutch provinces were wrestling with the power of Spain for an independent national existence and for liberty of conscience. How little did we think, in those piping days of peace, that within a few short weeks the neighbouring country of Belgium would be overrun by an even more ruthless conqueror; and that the head of a world-famous German university, whose hand we clasped in cordial friendship, would now be handing out honorary degrees to two leading representatives of the Krupp works at Essen, in recognition of their diabolical preëminence in the forging of death-dealing weapons of war!

One never can tell, in the life of a nation any more than in private life, what would have happened if a different course had been pursued. The other side holds that if England had meant war she should have said so at once. One reason for the insensate hatred by which we are assailed to-day is that we are alleged to have waited craftily until Germany had become embroiled with both France and Russia before jumping in as a make-weight against her. Germany sincerely believed that, sooner or later, war with Russia (whom she really feared) was inevitable. For a time she seems to have hoped that she might have Russia alone to deal with, and she looked to England to keep France quiet. It was only after France too had accepted her challenge that we decided to go in against her, so as to turn the balance.

This statement of the case is ludicrously at variance with the facts, as now ascertained. We know that England was certainly not scheming how to get into the war, but much rather how to keep out of it. It may well be questioned whether, if we had promptly declared our solidarity with France and Russia, the war would thereby have been prevented. Is it not rather to our credit that we hesitated, and that we delayed even to the verge of weakness? What better proof can be given that we were free from any actual commitment than the fact that, when France first pledged her support to Russia, Sir Edward Grey refused to make any promise? No one says now that we ought to have continued to stand out, and so have saved our skins. For though one can never speak with certainty of what might have been, all the evidence goes to show that if we had left France and Belgium to their fate the German occupation of the coast-line would have been much more undisputed than it is to-day; and then England's turn would have come next. She did well to spurn the Cyclopean gift of a promise that she would be "eaten last!"

I have said that there was no unreasoning impulse about our intervention. And we did not go in because we were ordered to do so by any superior authority. This is not for us—as some Americans are too apt to believe—a war of Kings, and Emperors, and Cabinets. Nor was it through the British Foreign Secretary that the final and fateful word was spoken: his formula throughout the negotiations was "subject to the support of Parliament." That is one of the facts which Mr. Bernard Shaw seems altogether to have overlooked. It was the representatives of the nation, assembled in the Mother of Parliaments, that voted a war credit with practical unanimity; and their action in what was put to them as a matter of duty and honour at once received the heartiest possible endorsement, not only of their English constituents but also of men of every kind of political persuasion throughout all our oversea Dominions. This is government by democracy, and considering the character of parliamentary representation in

England, and the system of ministerial responsibility, not to the individual ruler (as in Germany) but to the elected representatives of the people, one may assert confidently that our going to war was as much a direct act of the British nation as it could have been under the most republican constitution.

The same critics who profess to believe that England wanted the war taunt us at the same time with not having done more to protect Belgium. The truth is that our delay and our obvious military unpreparedness furnish in themselves the best of answers. Yet for both there are compensations. The impressive spectacle was afforded at home of an immediate cessation from all domestic strife, with a resulting solidarity which could not have been achieved if the government had taken what some would have been certain to attack as a premature decision; while the growth of our military efficiency for fighting purposes is guaranteed by the fact that the Empire is acting as a unit, in a way that promises more for its further organization than another twenty-five years of imperial talk. In fact, if the thing had to be, the stage could not be better set than it is, even if we had had the whole management in our own hands. Hence these (German) tears!

The immediate reason for British intervention was of course, as everybody knows, the invasion of Belgium. Opposition to this sudden move on the part of Germany was for England a matter of duty as well as self-interest. She could not well have stood aside while the Belgian coast-line was passing into the hands of another Power—especially one which was showing so little respect for its plighted word. That would have given the opportunity for "pointing a pistol straight at England's heart," as the Germans are now trying to do from Antwerp and Ostend and Zeebrugge. And there was the further motive of preventing, if possible, any would-be combatant from using Belgian soil once more as a battle-ground. Some craven-hearted ones have asked if it would not have been better, especially in view of the

immediate sequel, if Belgium had quietly acquiesced in the passage of German troops. But what a disservice to France, which had made no difficulty whatever about renewing its guarantee to respect Belgian neutrality! It would have been like letting a burglar in by a back-door. Belgium would thereby have placed herself in a state of war with France. And there is the further consideration of the obligations of international law, which cannot be treated as a "scrap of paper" without the direst consequences to civilization. It is an elementary principle of the law of nations that a neutral state is bound to deny a right of passage to a belligerent. Here Britain had a clear duty to perform, in the interest of international faith and the right of a weaker nation to maintain its independence. One only regret is that it did not occur to the King of the Belgians, in appealing to England for aid, to appeal at the same time to the United States as well! All neutral nations have an interest in preventing the world from being swept back into barbarism, with all its attendant phenomena of violence and terror, by an open disregard of so much as there is of international law. It is only a short year since the Lord High Chancellor of England, speaking before the American Bar Association on the subject of "Higher Nationality," was sanguine enough to speculate on the growth among nations of a habit of looking to common ideals "sufficiently strong to develop a General Will, and to make the binding power of these ideals a reliable sanction for their obligations to each other." Lord Haldane took the German word "Sittlichkeit," or "mannerliness," to illustrate his meaning, defining it as the system of habitual or customary conduct, ethical rather than legal, which embraces all those obligations of the citizens which it is "bad form" to disregard. In view of what has happened in Belgium, he could not make such an address to-day. Germany has revived the traditional barbarism that looks to conquest and the waging of successful war as the main instrument and aim of the highest statesmanship. In place of the "Sittlichkeit" that was to incline nations in ever-increasing measure to act

towards each other as "gentlemen," she has substituted "Furchtbarkeit"—"frightfulness"—the word which was deliberately chosen by the German Emperor for the purpose of recalling the less shocking example of Attila and his horde of Huns.

But the trouble did not begin in Belgium. We must go further back for such a historical survey as may be possible within the limits of this paper.

At the beginning of the chapter immediately preceding stands the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand. But there were several chapters previous to that, and due weight must be given to the argument of the other side when it contends that the murder at Sarajevo was only the culmination of a long series of Servian conspiracies against the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The question is one of predominance in South Eastern Europe, and the change of policy inaugurated by the German Emperor, in that as in other directions, is strikingly brought home to us when we remember that Bismarck would not have been interested. Of the Bulgarian affair in 1885 he had said that it was "not worth the bones of a Pomeranian grenadier." The leading motive of the assassination was doubtless resentment at the way Austria had behaved in the lawless annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908. It was then that the Emperor William took his stand beside his ally "in shining armour." Russia had been effectually weakened by her experiences in the Japanese War, and it must have been a great humiliation to her, in a matter where Slavic interests were concerned, to be threatened with hostilities by Germany in the event of her attempting to take military action against Austria. To Britain the whole thing meant very little, and in the days when the streets of London were placarded with posters reading "To H—ll with Servia," the ordinary passer-by did not find it in his heart to offer any objection. What we had to complain of afterwards was the extraordinary character of the Austrian ultimatum to Servia, and the circumstances in which it seems to have been conceived. It is significant, to begin with, that nothing was said about it at Vienna to any

of the foreign diplomats, except the German Ambassador. He knew all about the message before it was sent off, and is said to have "endorsed every line of it." If it had not been formally communicated beforehand to the Foreign Secretary at Berlin or the Imperial Chancellor, its terms were known to the Emperor and to the representatives of the war-party that was engaged in the congenial operation of pushing him on to a point from which he could not draw back. There is a Prussian ring in the tone of the Austrian message, with its headings and sub-headings, its prescribed formulæ for the Servian reply, and its demand for an answer within forty-eight hours. All other competitors for the champion-title of the "bully of Europe" may withdraw in favour of those who concocted this uncompromising document!

It was really aimed at Russia and the *status quo* in the Balkans, and the expectation may have been that Russia would take it as quietly as she had taken the Austrian violation of the Treaty of Berlin six years before. Responding to the pressure brought to bear upon her, Servia forwarded a reply in which she sought to give satisfaction, asking at the same time for a reference, as regarded one of the conditions, to the International Court at the Hague. This was rejected by Austria, and her representatives were instructed to leave the Servian capital without delay. The first efforts of Russian diplomacy thereafter were directed towards securing an extension of the time-limit allowed by Austria. This was refused. Thereupon Sir Edward Grey made more than one suggestion (25th and 26th July) for conference and mediation—Russia undertaking to stand aside, and to leave the matter in the hands of the four neutral nations, France, Germany, Great Britain, and Italy. But the attitude of Germany, declared with a significant element of contradiction among her various representatives, was that she agreed with her ally in regarding the quarrel as a "purely Austrian concern with which Russia had nothing to do."*

*Contrast the German White Book which says (p. 4) that Germany was "perfectly aware that a possible warlike attitude of Austria-Hungary against Servia might bring Russia into the field."

Obviously it was here that the European train left the rails, and we know now where to place the responsibility, with all its unspeakable consequences, for refusing to accept the Servian reply even as a basis of negotiation. If each and every one of the Powers had been sincerely and genuinely interested in the maintenance of peace, they could surely have attained their ends at this stage by the simple process of getting round a table for conference and discussion. The horror of the *denouement* is intensified by the fact, subsequently communicated by our representative at Vienna, that some change of heart had made Austria willing in the end to re-open conversations with Russia on the basis of the Servian reply. But meanwhile there had been mutterings of mobilization, and Germany's ultimatum to France and to Russia rendered a peaceful settlement impossible.

Whether it can be proved, or not—with the material at present available—that the military faction at Berlin was working for the war which it had so long gloated over in imagination, there can be no doubt that Germany must take the blame of having blocked the proposed conference. It is said by his apologists that the Emperor laboured sincerely to the end—working along a private path of his own—in the cause of peace. But it must be asked, with all deference, what right he had to any private path when the peace of Europe was known to be trembling in the balance? This is where we might have expected to hear from the various Peace and Arbitration Societies, especially on the continent of America. With all respect to the obligations of the official neutrality so carefully laid down at Washington—obligations which individual Americans like ex-President Eliot have found it hard to observe—the question naturally suggests itself why those who have worked so devotedly for peace have not as yet raised their voices, no matter how ineffectually, in protest against the influences which refused to invoke the concert of Europe in the only way by which war might have been avoided. By keeping silence they seem to me to have rendered much of their previous work ineffec-

tive and of no account in "practical politics." They are in danger of effacing themselves.

It is surely not uncharitable to say that if Germany had really wanted war, she could hardly have taken a better method of achieving her purpose. Her previous record is not such as to inspire confidence. It is unnecessary to refer to her dealings with Denmark in 1864, with Austria in 1866, or with France in 1870. There is little credit in having kept the peace for forty years if it can be shown that you have generally got what you wanted by merely rattling your sabre. Germany was saved from the crime of a second attack on France in 1875. Coming nearer our own times, it is now an established fact of history that she would have profited by our difficulties to intervene in the South African War if it had not been for the British navy. In 1905 she imposed her will on France, and brought about the resignation of Monsieur Delcassé, just before the Algeciras Conference. In 1908 the Emperor took his stand "in shining armour" beside his Austrian ally, whom he abetted in the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. And in 1911 came the incident of the *Panther* and *Agadir*, in connexion with which we were told by Monsieur Barthou in Montreal that if France had been saved from invasion she "owed it solely to the steadfast loyalty of her English allies." To-day Germany is giving proof of the thoroughgoing character of her preparations for war. Nothing need be said of her navy-building, in regard to which the Emperor indited, early in 1908, a long letter to the First Lord of the Admiralty which was obviously designed to lull him into a false sense of security. The German navy was being built purely for defensive purposes, and England was making herself ridiculous, in the Kaiser's opinion, by taking any account of it! For these defensive purposes an increased expenditure of one million sterling per annum was authorized in 1912 for a period of six years. How fortunate it is for us that when war broke out the British navy was found ready to concentrate in the North Sea, which we shall no longer call by its alternative name the "German Ocean!"

Nor is it necessary to dwell on Germany's activities along other lines, such as the construction of strategical railways converging on the Dutch and Belgian frontiers, the provision of increased facilities for transports at ports of embarkation, the building in foreign territory of concrete emplacements for heavy siege-guns, the amazing volume of war-literature that issues every year from her publishing houses, culminating in Bernhardi's book "Germany and the Next War," the institution of a far-reaching system of espionage by which she sought to pry into the naval and military secrets of other nations, and read them like an open book. She turned a deaf ear, as the Liberal party, under Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, learned to its cost, to all suggestions for a reduction of armaments. She showed herself no friend to any of the proposals, especially in regard to mine-laying and bomb-throwing, by which it was sought at the Hague conferences to mitigate in advance the actual horrors of war. And Mr. Asquith has told us quite recently that when, in 1912, his Cabinet thought it wise to approach her with an assurance that we would neither make nor join in any unprovoked attack upon her, declaring that "aggression upon Germany is not the subject, and forms no part of any treaty, understanding, or combination to which Britain is now a party, nor will she become a party to anything that has such an object," she had the audacity to turn round and ask the British Government to abandon the Triple Entente altogether and give her a pledge of absolute neutrality should she become engaged in any war. She asked us, in fact—as Mr. Asquith put it—to give her "a free hand" when she should choose her own time "to overbear and dominate the European world!" And when Mr. Asquith made this disclosure (2nd October, 1914), the *North-German Gazette*, with true German logic, drew the inference that "the English Government was already in 1912 determined under all circumstances to take part in a European war on the side of Germany's enemies!"

This record is hardly calculated, as has been said above, to inspire confidence. It does not predispose us to accept

without demur the statement made by Professors Haeckel and Eucken, when they complained, "Our foes have disturbed us in our peaceful work, forcing the war upon us very much against our desire." Poor injured innocents! We are more inclined to view the outbreak of the war in the light of other utterances, such as that of von der Goltz, who said that the German statesman would show himself a traitor to his country who, believing war to be inevitable and being himself ready for it, failed to get beforehand with the enemy by striking the first blow; or the notorious Bernhardi, who made a more or less secret tour through the United States a year or two ago, addressing exclusively German societies, and telling them exactly what was going to happen and how it was going to be done. Bernhardi's book includes, among many other gems, the following: "All which other nations attained in centuries of natural development—political union, colonial possessions, naval power, international trade—was denied to our nation until quite recently. What we now wish to obtain must be *fought for*, against a superior force of hostile interests and powers." And again: "Let it be the task of our diplomacy so to shuffle the cards that we may be attacked by France, for then there would be a reasonable prospect that Russia for a time would remain neutral. . . . If we wish to bring about an attack by our opponents, we must initiate an active policy which, without attacking France, will so prejudice her interests or those of England that both these States would feel compelled to attack us. Opportunities for such procedure are offered both in Africa and in Europe." At Zabern, for instance, and in Morocco! Surely Professor Gilbert Murray hit the mark when he described such programmes as "the schemes of an accomplished burglar expounded with the candour of a child."

Nietzsche correctly expressed the prevailing German point of view, when, instead of saying that a good cause sanctifies every war, he laid down the maxim that a good war justifies and sanctifies every cause! "War and courage," he went on to say, "have done greater things than love

of your neighbour." Germany has been brought up to believe in war, not as a disagreeable necessity, but as a high political instrument and a supreme test of national character. Imperial security for her implies the power of taking the aggressive, without consideration for the rights of others or her own good faith, wherever her interests or her national pride may seem to suggest. The latest utterance of Maxmilian Harden has let the cat out of the bag even in regard to this war. "We willed it," he says; "we had to will it. Our might will create a new law for Europe. It is Germany that strikes. When she has conquered new domains for her genius, then the priesthoods of all the gods will praise the good war. Now that Germany's hour has struck she must take her place as the leading power. Any peace which did not win her the first position would be no reward for her efforts." Here we have the most recent expression, naked and unashamed, of the "swelled-headedness" and megalomania which have brought our German friends to believe that they have a Heaven-sent mission to dominate the whole world. The leadership of Europe is what they have been after all the time, to begin with. And here the overthrow of France and England was a necessary preliminary. As to France, Bernhardi had shown how, after a resistless rush through Belgium, Germany was to "square her account with France and crush her so completely that she could never again come across our path." And in the same spirit von Treitschke, who believed a collision with England to be inevitable, had warned his countrymen that the "settlement with England would probably be the longest and the most difficult." It is as a consequence of following the will-o'-the-wisp of a German world-wide empire that Germany has been brought to the pass in which she stands to-day. And when official verification can be secured of the various statements which go to prove that the war-party in Berlin was confidently counting on war long before it actually broke out, and had carefully calculated how and when it could best profit from the difficulties by which other nations, notably

England,* were known to be embarrassed, little or nothing will be required to make the story complete. When told, it may even help to reconcile the German people themselves to the defeat and discomfiture which they so richly deserve.

But even with our present knowledge of the facts, is it not amazing to us that Germany should seek to fasten the blame on the other side, when she herself had drawn up such an advance programme as that which has just been described? Take England, for instance. Everybody knows, or ought to know, that there is no country in the world that has a greater interest than England in the continued maintenance of peace. She wants nothing from anybody—except to be let alone. She certainly would not have been likely, on any flimsy pretext, to provoke a conflict with her best customer. But the Germans insist that she had two motives for going to war against them; first, alarm at the rapid growth of their navy; and second, envy and jealousy on account of the marvellous expansion of German trade and commerce. No doubt the rivalry in naval armaments, where the pace has been set by Germany, has for the last ten or twelve years been a tremendous strain on England, especially under a government that would far rather have spent the money on something else; but she was doing fairly well in the competition, and with the Dominions ranging themselves at her side she would soon have had nothing more to fear. As to commercial

* "The time had been carefully chosen. England was supposed to be on the verge of a civil war in Ireland and a new mutiny in India. France had just been through a military scandal in which it appeared that the army was short of hoots and ammunition. Russia, besides a great strike and internal troubles, was re-arming her troops with a new weapon, and the process was only half through. Even the day was chosen. It was in a week when nearly all the ambassadors were away from their posts, taking their summer holiday—the English ambassador at Berlin, the Russian ambassadors at Berlin and Vienna, the Austrian Foreign Minister, the French Prime Minister, the Servian Prime Minister, the Kaiser himself, and others who might have used a restraining influence on the war party. Suddenly, without a word to any outside power, Austria issued an ultimatum to Servia, to be answered in forty-eight hours. Seventeen of these hours had elapsed before the other powers were informed, and war was declared on Servia before all the ambassadors could get back to their posts. The leading statesmen of Europe sat up all night trying for conciliation, for arbitration, even for bare delay. At the last moment, when the Austrian Foreign Minister had returned, and had consented to a basis for conversations with Russia, there seemed to be a good chance that peace might be preserved; but at that moment Germany launched her ultimatum at Russia and France, and Austria was already invading Servia. In twenty-four hours six European powers were at war."—Professor Gilbert Murray, in "How can War ever be right?"

rivalry, can anyone imagine Sir Edward Grey sitting down at the supreme moment to calculate the volume of trade in the Balkans, or who would get the business along the line of the Bagdad railway? No: his loyal and devoted efforts were directed exclusively to averting the horrors of war from Europe. The fact that Mr. Bernard Shaw has recently been saying something different should be received everywhere as a new proof of the truth of the proposition. England's obvious military unpreparedness ought to be the best answer to any suggestion that she was planning for war. The argument against her is being conducted to a large extent by persons who profess to have a well-founded belief in her treachery, her selfishness, her hypocrisy, and above all her decadence and degeneracy. Here my friends the professors have filled an absolutely surprising rôle. One has to remember, however, that degeneracy may overtake institutions as well as nations. You would not go to the German universities to-day for a free and unfettered expression of opinion about matters in which the German government was directly interested. The influence of the military autocracy, which has permeated all strata of society, has extended itself to the institutions of higher learning—yes, and to the churches as well. Many of the leading professors are Privy Councillors, and cannot always exercise the privilege of independent thought. They have followed too literally Treitschke's direction to "be governmental," and have done much to justify Mommsen's fears as to what would happen to the German people if militarism were allowed to take captive every other element. How can we otherwise explain Eucken and Haeckel? Here are some of their findings: "Undoubtedly the German invasion in Belgium served England as a welcome pretext to openly declare her hostility;" and again, "England's complaints of the violation of international law are the most atrocious hypocrisy and the vilest Pharisaism."

To these two I add Ostwald, who appears to have had a beatific vision of Germany enthroned in central Europe,

with the other nations grouped around her, and as a counterpoise on the American continent the United States, with Canada to the north and the Latin republics to the south leaning up against her, as it were, in deferential pose. He also seems to approve of a sort of "merger" or "combine" for all small nations, while wishing to apply the reverse process in the case of Russia. Here are some of Ostwald's utterances: "The further end of destroying the source from which for two or three centuries all European strifes have been nourished and intensified, namely, the English policy of world dominion. I assume that the English dominion will suffer a downfall similar to that which I have predicted for Russia, and that under these circumstances Canada would join the United States, the expanded republic assuming a certain leadership with reference to the South American republics.

"The principle of the absolute sovereignty of the individual nations, which in the present European tumult has proved itself so inadequate and baneful, must be given up and replaced by a system conforming to the world's actual conditions, and especially to those political and economic relations which determine industrial and cultural progress and the common welfare."

We had Ostwald's son lecturing for us at McGill last winter, when we little dreamed that such were the sentiments of his distinguished father. What a collapse of all our hopes of international academic solidarity! And the odd thing is that the Germans should profess to believe that it is *we* who have been scheming for *their* downfall! It is a relatively unimportant incident, but as I have mentioned McGill I may place on record in these pages the fact that when that university had the honour of welcoming a few years ago the highest lady in the land, these words were used: "Nowhere is there a fuller realization than in our national universities of the debt we owe to the country which has sent us a daughter so distinguished: and our prayer is that in the coming time Britain may march forward along the path of

progress in none but amiable relations with a friendly Germany." We may have been wrong in our forecast of the future, but our sincerity cannot be questioned by any of the professors from whom I have just quoted. And the sentiment which found sincere utterance in Montreal would have been similarly expressed in every university centre throughout the Empire. Why then are we treated as though we had been harbouring ill-will and hatred in our hearts? This seems to me to be even more insulting than the suggestion so constantly made by our German critics, to the effect that Britain's day is done, that the sceptre she has won by doubtful methods is now falling from her nerveless grasp, that the Empire of which we can boast to-day "does not correspond to the vital power of Great Britain to defend it," and that she had better prepare to make way for a stronger successor, ready and able to take over her business! Never perhaps in all history have we had a better case for the application of the old saw, *Quos Deus vult perdere prius dementat*: those whom God wishes to destroy he first deprives of reason!

What are the lessons which we in Canada should draw from the war? I rejoice that we have shown by our acts that we regard it as a Canadian war. It is in very truth what the British Blue-books have been referring to for years as a "war in defence of the Empire"—a possibility suddenly converted into a fact. There is no use in going back on the past, though personally I hope that the type of person will disappear from our midst who used to spend all his energies in calculating what Canada would do in the (very remote) contingency of "England embarking on a war of which the Canadian Parliament could not approve." He could not get it out of his head that the question he had to consider was whether he would "help the old country," instead of whether he would or would not fight for his life! For all the time the foe was at our gates. What brought the true inwardness of the situation home to every one in Canada (except, of course, Mr. Bourassa), and to the other over-sea Dominions as well, was the spectacle of the German Ambassador in London

trying to bargain with the British Government that, if England would only remain neutral, Germany would promise not to take any more of the soil of France but *only the French colonies*. If the French colonies now, why not the English next? It may be hoped that, with further progress in the direction of imperial organization—still along the line of voluntary coöperation—we shall get rid now of the phrase which has so long disfigured the official publications of the Imperial Conference, "Should any of the Dominions desire to assist in the defence of the Empire at a time of real danger." That is surely a worn-out formula, imposed on a scrupulous home-government by the apathy and half-heartedness of colonial statesmen.

Even a warlike paper such as this must not be allowed to close without a word of praise for so doughty an antagonist. That the British are good sportsmen is proved by their admiration for the exploits of the German commander of the *Emden*. We cannot praise other things the Germans have done in the course of this war—their spying and lying, their mine-laying, their indiscriminate bomb-throwing, their destruction of public buildings and artistic treasures, their terrorizing of the civil population, their military execution of hostages and their brigand-like levy of huge ransoms from the cities through which they have passed. In olden times the robber-chief would build his castle at the head of some narrow defile, so as to take toll of all who went that way; but his modern representative moves his minions from one place to another, and presents his bill of expenses as he goes! These are certainly unwelcome results of the German love of thoroughness. There is much disillusionment in store for the Germans in the near future. At present they can see nothing but red. And they seem to believe everything they are told—which perhaps, after all, is not very much. It is an astounding fact that while the British Foreign Office has included in its Blue-book, and has spread broadcast over the whole world, an official translation of the German White Book, giving the German account of the origin of the war, its German transla-

tion of the British White Paper (in which the documents are left to speak for themselves) *has to be smuggled into Germany*. Such a state of things cannot long continue. Meanwhile we can even afford to admire the spectacle of a great nation rallying round its ruler under the inspiration of an overwhelming national sentiment. The crowd that attacked the British Embassy at Berlin only knew what it had been told: its demeanour contrasted unfavourably with that of those who gathered outside Buckingham Palace at the time of the declaration of war—not jubilant and shouting, but calm, quiet, and determined. And the so-called “mercenaries” whom Britain sent forward into the firing-line were and are much better posted in the facts of the case than the German conscript hurried off with his identification disc almost before he has had time to learn who it is that he is going to fight and where. But Germany has indeed shown a united front, which it will maintain till questions begin to be asked and answered. Then will come a rude awakening. The national conscience cannot be left forever in the keeping of the bureaucracy at Berlin. The German system of administration is one of the most efficient, if not the most efficient, in the world. In fact I am sometimes inclined to think that six months of German rule would be a very good thing for many of us—say in the Province of Quebec! But it carries with it a certain suppression of individuality which would not find favour with us. The average citizen in Germany is over apt to take his views from those whom he looks up to as the authorized and accredited representatives of the nation. He has too small a voice in the regulation of his own affairs. Especially in connexion with such an issue as the one under discussion, it is the bureaucracy that does the main part of the work in the moulding of public opinion.

That is why, in spite of all our admiration for German thoroughness and efficiency, we need not abase ourselves before the German system. We admire their patriotism, and their utter self-surrender at the call of country. We can learn much from their skill in organization, their intensity of

purpose, their devotion to work, their moral earnestness, and their achievements in the field of science and art and letters. But on our side we have also something to show—some claims to consideration that ought to save us from organized misrepresentation and hate. The Empire which has come into collision with Germany is also the fruit of high moral as well as great practical qualities, which have extorted the admiration, if sometimes also the envy, of the world. We do not recognize ourselves when we are told that we are merely a "robber state," which for centuries has prospered as the "bully of Europe"—we who have fought and bled for freedom since the days of the Great Charter down to Napoleon! Our watchword is liberty rather than dominion, and self-governing institutions are to us the breath of life. We have no sympathy with the methods or ideals of absolutism and autocratic government. Within the boundaries of our Empire peoples of widely different origin, and at various stages of civilization, are free to develop themselves spontaneously, and without domineering interference, to the highest of which they may be capable. We do not understand any of the new-fangled jargon about the State being superior to ordinary considerations of morality, and about its material interests being the one rule that transcends even the obligations of conscience. To us good is good, and evil is evil, alike for the community and for the individuals of whom the community consists. We take no part in the worship of mere might, or force, or power, and we do not share in the cult which makes war an immutable law of humanity. "The living God will see to it," said Treitschke, "that war shall always recur as a terrible medicine for mankind." This dictum may summarize one aspect of the philosophy of history, but when it is applied in the concrete as a justification or explanation of the atrocities we are witnessing to-day our souls revolt against it. We want to help to dethrone that evil spirit of militarism which, rooted as it is in the bad traditions of a ruthless past, has spread its baleful influence all over Germany. The world will breathe more

freely if we can establish an international alliance against military despotism, so that never again shall it be in the power of a small group of individuals to work such havoc with the bodies and souls of men. The supreme compensation we shall claim when the day of reckoning comes is that there shall be a pause in the mad race of armaments. England has tried for this before, but now she will speak, let us hope, with the voice of united Europe. As Mr. Frederic Harrison has put it, in his recent pamphlet on "The Meaning of the War": "If the armies of Germany and Austria, of Russia and of France, are by international conventions and European law reduced to moderate proportions, the blood tax will be taken off the nations of the world. The peaceful union of a European confederation may begin to be a reality, and at last the progress of civilization may advance in security, free from the nightmare of perpetual expectation of war."

Meanwhile, till that time—the real "Day"—arrives, we can all with the utmost confidence, each and every one among us, repeat as our own the words of the Prime Minister of England, when he said: "I do not believe that any nation ever entered into a great controversy—and this is one of the greatest history will ever know—with a clearer conscience and stronger conviction that it is fighting, not for aggression, not for the maintenance even of its own selfish interest, but that it is fighting in defence of principles the maintenance of which is vital to the civilization of the world."

