

BERNHARDI ENDORSED BY PROFESSOR
CRAMB.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE late J. A. Cramb, professor of modern history in Queen's College, London, is a prophet of England who has called the attention of his countrymen to the German danger, explaining to them in vivid terms the messages of both Treitschke and Bernhardi to the German people. He is commonly referred to as the man who points out the "barbarism" of Germany, her militarism, her aspirations to world-power and the dangers which all this implies to Great Britain. And this is true, but it is a mistake to think that in so doing Professor Cramb belittles Germany, censures her militarism or ridicules her *Kultur*. He has no word of depreciation for Germany; on the contrary his attitude proves that he admires the Germans and wishes that his countrymen were, or in the present crisis would become, like them.

Senator Joseph H. Choate, who has written an introduction to the American edition, is apparently anti-German, but it would be wrong to ascribe the same tendency to the author himself. The fiery red protecting cover of this edition bears the announcement "Bernhardi answered" above the title of the book. The red color attracted my eye and I wanted to see what Professor Cramb had to say in answer to Bernhardi, but I found he practically endorses the German general in every important respect. He only insists on disproving the German idea of English degeneracy, English inefficiency, English haughtiness, English intolerance. The tone of the book is full of respect for Germany and for the old pagan view of the Germanic religion, the "religion of valor," the duty of offering one's life for the service of the fatherland, of standing up for right in battle, and of fighting the good fight, if need be, to the bitter end. The reader can feel in his lines Professor Cramb's regret at English narrowness, English unfairness and even the English

diplomacy which makes mercenaries or allies wage the wars of Great Britain. He still believes a revival of England possible, and appeals to the pride of the English, to their sense of honor, to their patriotism, that they may be strong and quit themselves like men in the struggle that is sure to come; and whatever the result, whether victory or defeat, that they, no less than the Germans, may be worthy to belong to the race of Odin's children.

Professor Cramb is well acquainted with Germany, German institutions, German literature and the German people, and he wants England to become better acquainted with Germany and refers not without irony to English ignorance on this special point. One passage of Professor Cramb will illustrate his regret that the English should give little heed to a subject which he deems very important. He says:

"If Germany is our enemy of enemies, if the twentieth century is to witness such a conflict for empire as that of England against France in the eighteenth century, or against Spain in the sixteenth, what is more important than that we should understand the spiritual as well as the material resources of that enemy, than that we should seek to discover the hidden foundations of its strength and probe the most secret motives of its actions, the characterizing traits of its policy, the deep convictions which mould the history of the nation? For with nations as with individuals, it is character that counts; he that wills greatly conquers greatly.

"If, on the other hand, Germany is to be England's friend, perhaps even her ally, if blood indeed be thicker than water, then perfect mutual understanding, the earnest scrutiny of our separate aspirations as they emerge from our separate pasts, can only strengthen that friendship and render that alliance more enduring. For there is no surer basis of friendship, whether between individuals or nations, than the sympathy that is born of knowledge and the knowledge that, in turn, is produced by sympathy.

"Yet how far from that knowledge and how indifferent to its attainment are the majority of Englishmen in these times! Germany has one of the greatest and most profound schools of poetry—yet how many Englishmen have the secret of its high places or access to its templed wonders? Since the decline of Alexandria there has been no such group of daring thinkers as those of Germany in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; yet to most English men and women the 'Critique of Pure Reason' and the larger version of Hegel's 'Logic' are sealed as the 'Enneads' of Plotinus.

“Merely as an unexampled opportunity for the study of the soul of a people why should England neglect this literature? Why in 1913 should the following characteristic incident be even possible?

“A few weeks ago the head master of one of our public schools exhumed a letter of the late Mr. Gladstone, in which that eminent politician cast a slur upon the whole of German literature, denouncing the author of ‘Faust’ and of ‘Iphigenie’ as an immoral writer in whose works we find virtue banished and self-indulgence reigning. Yet Goethe is, perhaps, the most serene artist in words since Sophocles, and amongst the children of men not one has striven with a loftier purpose to divine, even though darkly, the bond of the Many and the One, and thus to justify the ways of God to man and of man to God. That in the welter of literary opinions, published and unpublished, of the late Mr. Gladstone, such a verdict on Goethe and on German literature should exist is not astonishing. The astonishing thing is that in the second decade of the twentieth century an Englishman should have been found who, having exhumed such a verdict, did not from very shame instantly cover it again in complete oblivion. Instead of this, he incontinently published it in the *Times*, not once only, but in two different issues. The publication of this letter is discreditable at once to the critic, to the exhumed, to the press and to the nation.

“I have neither the wish nor the hope that every Englishman should become a master of the German language and a learned student of the philosophy or the poetry of Germany, its history or its politics. My ambition is more modest. It is the hope that during the next few decades there may gradually arise here in England a wall, as it were, of cultured opinion, which should make the blunt enunciation of such judgments by a prominent politician all but impossible by the ridicule to which they would at once expose him, and their ratification by the head master of one of our public schools absolutely unthinkable.”

He adds further down:

“And the average Englishman, thus denied by his ignorance of the language all access to this deeper knowledge—to what sources of information does he trust? We know them well. There is, for instance, the Radical member of Parliament who, liberated from the cares of state, spends three weeks in Berlin, consorts with members of the Reichstag, and finds each and all of them thoroughly well-disposed towards peace with all men and with England in particular. What scaremongers are these, he asks indignantly, who talk of German ambitions or a German invasion? Then there is the

geographer and traveler who spends a somewhat longer period in the towns and villages of Brandenburg and West and East Prussia, and returns aghast at the intensity of hate which he found—at what he describes as ‘the all but insane desire for war with England’ which animates every class of society. There is, again, the statistician who enumerates the mileage of German railways and German canals, of Berlin streets and Berlin drains; or, again, the English officer of a type not yet obsolete, who, preparing for the Intelligence Department of the War Office, spends three months in Germany and finds in it ‘a nation of damned professors.’”

Professor Cramb recognizes the vigor innate in Germany, especially in Prussia, and quotes Frederick the Great, who, in the midst of danger, writes these lines:

“Pour moi, menacé du naufrage,
Je dois, en affrontant l’orage,
Penser, vivre et mourir en roi.”

Having surveyed the history of Germany, the heroism of the Teutons since the days of Alaric, he concludes:

“And now, under the Hohenzollern, what is the future? Bernhardt, at least, is explicit: ‘For us there are two alternatives and no third—world-dominion or ruin, *Weltmacht*¹ oder *Niedergang*.’ It is the interpretation of Treitschke’s maxim, *Selbst ist der Mann*.”

Professor Cramb continues:

“When, turning to England, I consider the apathy or the stolid indifference of the nation—when, for instance, I consider the deliberate and hostile silence or loud calumnies which for the past seven years have accompanied Lord Roberts’s crusade; and when over against this apathy I survey in this month of February, 1913, the energy, the single, devoted purposefulness throbbing everywhere throughout Germany, her forward-ranging effort, her inner life, her army, her fleet, I seem to hear again the thunder of the footsteps of a great host. . . . It is the war-bands of Alaric!”

Having listened to an inspiring speech of Lord Salisbury, in which was explained the growth of Germany from the building of the Kiel canal, he says that the first conflict between England and Germany arose when the latter began building battleships in spite of British protests. He adds in a footnote on page 41:

“And in that conflict England has suffered her first defeat, her first moral defeat. She has had to withdraw her fleet from the

¹ *Weltmacht* means world power and cannot properly be translated by world dominion; the latter would be in German *Weltherrschaft*. *Weltmacht* means a power whose influence extends over the whole world.

Mediterranean. That sea was once ours—an English lake. It is no longer ours. Our power is concentrated, watching our dearest friends, those Germans who have no intention whatever of coming near England!"

Lord Salisbury's speech made a deep impression on Professor Cramb. He says:

"As I walked from the meeting, the twilight falling across the park, the words of another orator came back to me—the exhortation addressed by Demosthenes to Athens, words which, spoken in Athens's darkest hour, bear a strange resemblance to those spoken by Lord Salisbury in this, the last of his great speeches. 'Yet, O Athenians,' said the Greek, 'yet is there time! And there is one manner in which you can recover your greatness, or, dying, fall worthy of your past at Marathon and Salamis. Yet, O Athenians, you have it in your power; and the manner of it is this. Cease to hire your armies. Go yourselves, every man of you, and stand in the ranks; and either a victory beyond all victories in its glory awaits you, or, falling, you shall fall greatly and worthy of your past!'"

This would mean militarism and would necessitate England's adopting the German institution of universal compulsory service in the army. Perhaps that will be England's fate in the future, although England claims that it is not fighting Germany but militarism. Professor Cramb no doubt would have England imitate Germany. He says:

"Rouse yourselves from your lethargy! Cease to hire your soldiers! Arm and stand in the ranks yourselves—as Englishmen should! And thus, dying you shall die greatly, or, victorious, yours shall be such a victory as nothing in England's past can exceed or rival."

We are constantly told that England stands for peace while Germany would establish an era of war. Let us hear what Professor Cramb has to say:

"Until about five hundred years ago England can hardly be said to have fought as a nation. Her wars till then represent rather the heroism of dynasties and of individual groups of men than the heroism of the nation as such. But towards the middle of the fourteenth century there began a series of really national wars in England—the wars against France, with their great battles of Crecy and Agincourt, and the great disaster, the hour when with Talbot at Castillon an empire sank. Then there is the war against Spain in the sixteenth century, and in the seventeenth the wars against

Holland and the France of Louis XIV, which continue into the eighteenth century and find their natural termination only in the wars against Napoleon. In the nineteenth century there is a long series of wars in all parts of the world—in the Crimea, in India and Afghanistan, in China, in New Zealand, in Egypt, in western and in southern Africa; so that it might be said without exaggeration that through all these years scarcely a sun set which did not look upon some Englishman's face dead in battle—dead for England!

“Now for what have these wars been fought? Can one detect underneath them any governing idea, controlling them from first to last? I answer at once: There is such an idea, and that idea is the idea of empire. All England's wars for the past five hundred years have been fought for empire. . . . And what was the stake for which England fought in all her battles against Bonaparte? The stake was world-empire; and Napoleon knew it well. France's opportunity was now, or her world-empire was lost for ever. Bonaparte fought for that, and fought for it titanically and superbly; and dying there in Sainte-Hélène there died with him a world-hope.”

Professor Cramb traces the same aspiration in the history of Germany since the foundation of the Holy Roman empire by the Frankish King Charlemagne. The historian Treitschke calls attention to the failure of this ideal of world dominion and in evidence of it quotes the sarcastic verse from Goethe's *Faust*:

“Das liebe heil'ge röm'sche Reich,
Wer hält's nur noch zusammen?”

Apparently Professor Cramb does not cherish the ideal of the pacifists, but looks upon it as a kind of sickness which is apt to poison the life of weak or decaying nations. He says:

“Upon a young and virile nation, a rising military state, daily growing in power, pacificism can never exert much influence for evil; there is no possibility of such a nation being seriously turned from heroism. But to an old nation in which certain forces of decay *seem*, at least, already to be manifesting themselves, might not such a theory, if too ardently adopted, be fraught with very terrible danger, with very real and disastrous consequences?”

“In regard to Germany we are confronted by certain circumstances that indisputably merit our consideration here in England. There is, for instance, the annual appearance in Germany of very nearly seven hundred books dealing with war as a science. This points, at once, to an extreme preoccupation in that nation with the

idea of war. I doubt whether twenty books a year on the art of war appear in this country, and whether their circulation, when they do appear, is much more than twenty! . . .

"A nation's military efficiency is the exact coefficient of a nation's idealism. That is Treitschke's solution of the matter. His answer to all our talk about the limitation of armaments is: Germany shall increase to the utmost of her power, irrespective of any proposals made to her by England or by Russia, or by any other state upon this earth. And I confess it is a magnificent and a manly answer, an answer worthy of a man whose spirit of sincerity, of regard for the reality of things, is as great as Carlyle's.

"The teaching of Treitschke's disciple, General von Bernhardi, is the same. War to him is a duty. Nothing is more terrible than the government of the strong by the weak, and war is the power by which the strong assert their dominion over the weak. War sets the balance right. And the younger poets of Germany breathe the same spirit—Liliencron, for instance, who represents most fitly that aspect of modern German literature. That spirit of war and glory which informs his battle-sketches of the war of 1870—I can sum it up for you. It is in the verses of Goethe's Euphion:

"Träumt ihr den Friedenstag?
Träume, wer träumen mag!
Krieg ist das Lösungswort!
Sieg! und so klingt es fort."²

"That is the spirit in which war is regarded in contemporary Germany."

England has become accustomed to wage her wars through allies, but Professor Cramb does not approve of that theory. He says:

"In this country we seem to be gradually acquiring the dangerous habit of mind of trusting to alliances rather than to our own strength. A great nation trusts to itself mainly; only secondarily to alliances, however intimate. For deep in the heart of every nation lie ancient, strong resentments, resentments that at a moment of crisis may flare up into ancient strifes.

"War has often revealed antagonisms between powers apparently friendly, and sympathies between powers apparently hostile. We speak much, for instance, of the Triple Entente; but of how

²"Dream ye of peaceful sway?
Dream on, who dream it may.
War still is empire's word!
Peace? By the victor's sword!"

long standing is our amity with France, and upon what foundations does it rest? Waterloo is not yet a century old, and Fashoda is but yesterday; and some half a century ago, between these two terms, the ignoble terror of a French invasion created the absurd volunteer system which a not less ignoble terror of Germany has recently transformed into the still more absurd territorial force.

“And Russia? At the present hour Germany seems in a state of dull hostility towards Russia, England in a state of very dull friendship with the same power. England, with her ancient dreams, her ancient traditions and ideals of the higher freedom, the larger justice, summons the aid of Russia to help her to govern, or misgovern, Persia! How can we hope that such an alliance, so unnaturally framed, will last? Does it not contain within itself the very seeds of its own destruction? And along the northern shore of the Persian Gulf or on the Afghan frontier we have with our own hands laid a mine which might at any moment shatter the fabric to pieces. He who cannot take within his range a prostrate France and the alliance of Russia and Germany against England is not a student of politics, whatever else he may be.”

Professor Cramb believes in the principle which he repeatedly quotes from Demosthenes, and addresses his countrymen thus:

“England must take upon herself the fulfilment of her destiny, depending upon herself alone for the realization of a destiny that is *her* destiny.”

Professor Cramb is an Englishman and he appeals to his countrymen to be heroes and not (as he so often regretfully suggests) hypocrites. He has sat at the feet of Treitschke and Bernhardi; he believes in the religion of valor and ends his book with these words:

“And if the dire event of a war with Germany—if it *is* a dire event—should ever occur, there shall be seen upon this earth of ours a conflict which, beyond all others, will recall that description of the great Greek wars:

“‘Heroes in battle with heroes,
And above them the wrathful gods.’

“And one can imagine the ancient, mighty deity of all the Teutonic kindred, throned above the clouds, looking serenely down upon that conflict, upon his favorite children, the English and the Germans, locked in a death-struggle, smiling upon the heroism of that struggle, the heroism of the children of Odin the War-god!”