

MISCELLANEOUS.

A COMMUNICATION FROM PROFESSOR CONYBEARE.

To the Editor of The Open Court:

I would like you to publish the following supplementary note to the article and letter on the antecedents of the war, which I recently sent you. [See "Responsibility for the War" in the July issue.]

I regret that I used so strong a phrase as the "lies and hypocrisies of our public men and press." I should have used the word *rhodomontade*. I referred to the absurd campaign of vilification against German learning and science. We ought long ago to have set ourselves to imitate their thoroughness and efficiency. I also had in view the manner in which early in the war mere skirmishes were magnified by our orators and reporters into victories. The papers were full of such headlines as "The Germans Routed by Land and Sea," "Last Stand of the Huns," etc. *Punch* even had a cartoon of the Kaiser fleeing in terror before a host of Cossacks. It seemed to me that before even we put our armor on we were boasting as might a man when he puts it off, and I felt it all to be very ominous.

I am not sure also that I was not too severe upon Sir Edward Grey. It used to be said of him that he was a lath painted to look like steel, and I fear he is a weak man and given to vacillation; but that he is a pacifist his well-meant attempt to alter the law of capture at sea surely proves. His ideal here was on the whole "free ship, free goods"; and if all nations adopted it there would be no need of navies on their present scale, for the ocean would be neutralized to all intents and purposes.

Perhaps too I was too severe on Sir Edward Grey for not adopting Sir G. Buchanan's plan of non-intervention; for it must be remembered that it is as vital an interest for us to defend France as for Germany to defend Austro-Hungary. I fancy that Grey's idea was to be able in any crisis to restrain France and Russia, and so keep the peace of Europe. But this policy really puts us at the mercy of Russia or of Germany; whichever of them chose to go to war, we were committed to joining in it, for or against. In this case it was certainly Germany that on July 31 was the first to relinquish the attitude of defense for that of offense. Even if Russia threatened her by mobilizing she should not have gone beyond counter-mobilization. She struck the first blow and so precipitated the catastrophe; and by way of making it worse she invaded Belgium, knowing full well that that would inflame us to declare war on her. I am sure Lloyd George is right when he states that without the outrage on this small and innocent state neither he nor the majority of his colleagues would ever have voted for war.

Why did Germany on July 31 so suddenly abandon her peaceful attitude of the day before? Was the Emperor overpowered by the war faction? Was he afraid of being stigmatized as a poltroon, as he was in 1911? We shall know some day.

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