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The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Founded by EDWARD C. HEGELER.



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(After a photograph.)

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And every hand was needed in the chain
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THE MIRAGE.

Peace on Earth is a beautiful vision which noble dreamers of mankind
behold above the clouds.

Frontispiece to The Open Court.

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VOL. XXVIII. (No. 10)

OCTOBER, 1914

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ENGLAND AND GERMANY.

(Reprinted from *The Saturday Review*, London, September 11, 1897.)

THE OLD WISE MAN of Europe has spoken. And there should fall on England the silence of reflection and preparation. "The chief topic of conversation between the Emperor and the Tsar," said Prince Bismarck, as quoted by the *Times*, "must have turned on the subject of England." The old statesman has watched the growth of the grafts they planted on the Prussian stock, and knows that the principalities and provinces of the German Empire are united into a vigorous and organic whole. He knows that Russia, shapeless and vast, an incompressible but docile fluid, may be quietly held off the flanks of Germany, to creep slowly and irrepressibly through the Balkans to the sea. There, in a corner remote from German interests, it may meet the enemies of Germany with explosive violence. And France? Does he not remember how, when the difficulty France appeared to have in accepting the *fait accompli* of the integrality of the German Empire inspired in him a "prudent mistrust," he said to Ferry: "Seek some compensation. Found colonies. Take outside of Europe whatever you like; you can have it. And Ferry, without my ever having sought to create for him the slightest embarrassment—quite the contrary—obtained Tunis," and, he might have added, Tonkin? France busy with her Tunis and her Tonkin, Russia quietly pushed to the east and the south, and there was left for Germany the simple task of sitting peacefully on her bulging coffers, while her merchants captured the trade of England and her diplomatist guided the diplomatists of England into perpetual bickerings with other countries.

Prince Bismarck has long recognized what at length the people of England are beginning to understand—that in Europe there are two great, irreconcilable, opposing forces, two great nations who

would make the whole world their province, and who would levy from it the tribute of commerce. England, with her long history of successful aggression, with her marvelous conviction that in pursuing her own interests she is spreading light among nations dwelling in darkness, and Germany, bone of the same bone, blood of the same blood, with a lesser will-force, but, perhaps with a keener intelligence, compete in every corner of the globe. In the Transvaal, at the Cape, in Central Africa, in India and the East, in the islands of the Southern Sea, and the far north-west, wherever (and where has it not?) the flag has followed the Bible and trade has followed the flag, there the German bagman is struggling with the English pedler. Is there a mine to exploit, a railway to build, a native to convert from bread-fruit to tinned meat, from temperance to trade gin, the German and the Englishman are struggling to be first. A million petty disputes build up the greatest cause of war the world has ever seen. If Germany were extinguished to-morrow, the day after to-morrow there is not an Englishman in the world who would not be the richer. Nations have fought for years over a city or a right of succession; must they not fight for two hundred million pounds of commerce?

There is something pathetic in the fashion in which the aged statesman sees at once the swift approach of the catastrophe he was the first to anticipate, and the crumbling away of the preparations he had made against its event. Take first the approach of the event. Ten years ago, except to the Prince himself, and perhaps to one or two watchful Englishmen, the idea of a war between the two great Protestant Powers, so alike in temperament and genius, would have seemed impossible. Three years ago, [in 1894] when the *Saturday Review* began to write against the traditional pro-German policy of England, its point of view made it isolated among leading organs of opinion. When, in February 1896, one of our writers, discussing the European situation, declared Germany the first and immediate enemy of England, the opinion passed as an individual eccentricity. A month later the German flag was hissed at a London music-hall, and when on a Saturday night in April an evening paper sent out its newsboys crying "War with Germany!" the traffic of Edgeware Road stopped to shout. The outrageous follies of William the Witless, the German schemes in the Transvaal, the German breaches of international law in Central Africa, what Bismarck calls the "undue nagging of the English" in all diplomatic relations, the notorious set of German policy in the council of Ambassadors at Constantinople, and above all, the fashion

in which England has been made to learn the real extent of German commercial rivalry, have all done their work; and now England and Germany alike realize the imminent probability of war. What Bismarck realized, and what we too may soon come to see, is that not only is there the most real conflict of interests between England and Germany, but that England is the only Great Power who could fight Germany without tremendous risk and without doubt of the issue. Her partners in the Triple Alliance would be useless against England; Austria, because she could do nothing; Italy, because she dare not lay herself open to attack by France. The growth of Germany's fleet has done no more than to make the blow of England fall on her more heavily. A few days and the ships would be at the bottom or in convoy to English ports; Hamburg and Bremen, the Kiel Canal and the Baltic ports would lie under the guns of England, waiting until the indemnity were settled. Our work over, we need not even be at the pains to alter Bismarck's word to Ferry, and to say to France and Russia: "Seek some compensation. Take inside Germany whatever you like, you can have it."

Against the approach of such a disaster to Germany and such a triumph for England, Bismarck sees no hope in the negotiations between France and Russia. "I fear all these efforts have been made quite in vain. A serious active working *entente*, with a very definite program and a great deal of penetrating insight and tenacity, would be required to reach a result capable of moderating English pretension. I am perfectly sure that Germany will not compass it." And again, "Certainly, it would be a very good time to recover the Suez Canal and Egypt from the English. But I do not believe that in France there is any passionate interest in this question. They are right there, perhaps, to wait for us Germans to become still more deeply involved in our foreign policy. For at present we have neither leadership nor principles, in fact nothing, nothing whatever. It is a case of general groping and waste of the stores of influence which I had accumulated."

It was inevitable that England should have been the subject of discussion between the President and the Emperor: but, even under circumstances most favorable to Germany—that is to say, were Bismarck himself pulling the strings of Europe—there could have been only an attempt to moderate the pretensions of England. To this pass has the muddling of the German Emperor brought Germany, and at a time when England has awakened to what is alike inevitable and her best hope of prosperity.