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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



FRESCO IN LIVIA'S HOUSE.

(See pages 34-36.)

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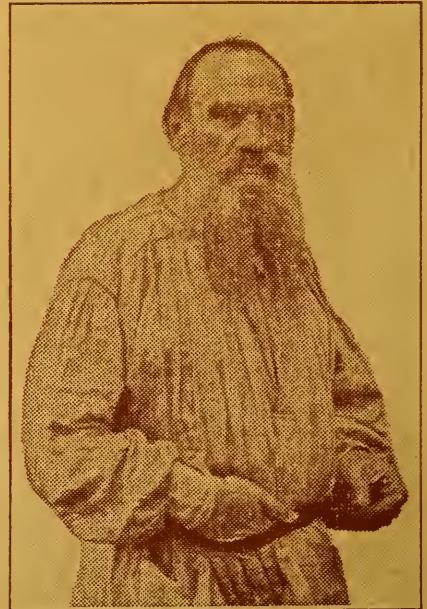
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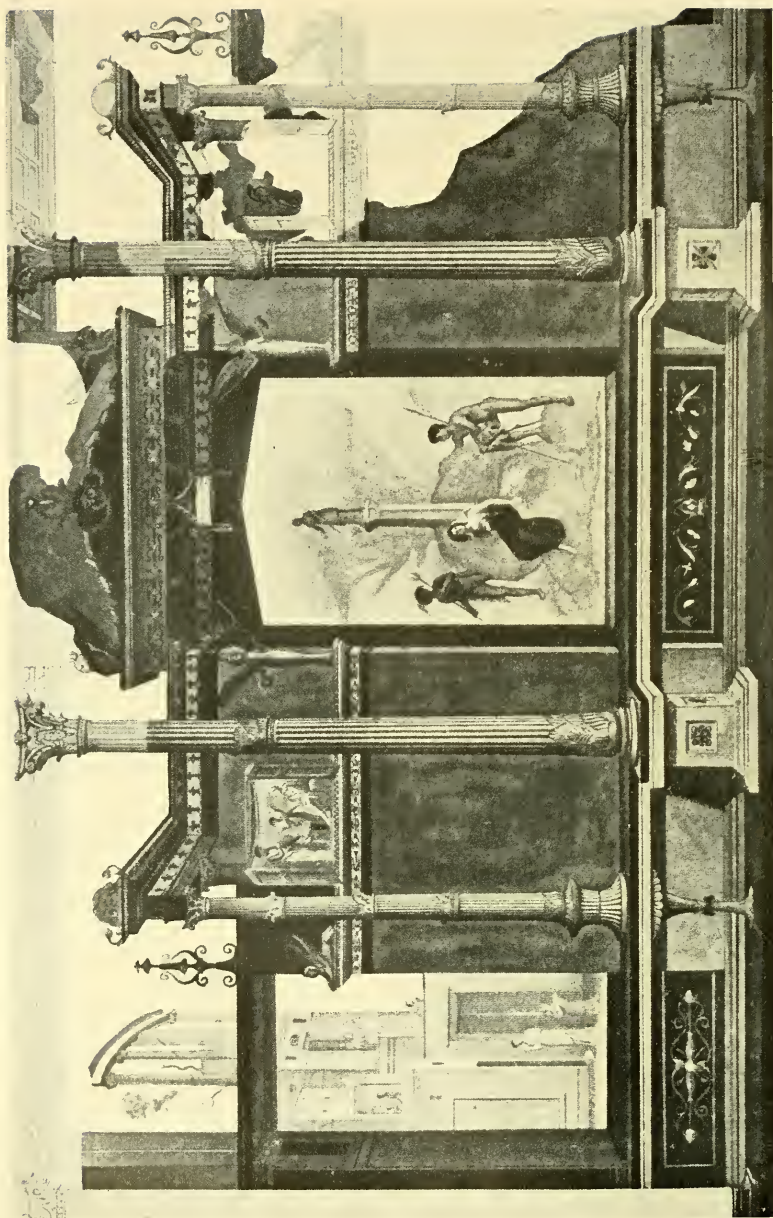
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Frontispiece to The Open Court.

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VOL. XXIX. (No. 1)

JANUARY, 1915

NO. 704

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AN AMERICAN RESIDENT OF FRANCE.

GRENOBLE, Nov. 12, 1914.

MY DEAR DR. CARUS:

I have read with interest your article on "The European War" in the October number of *The Open Court* and note your frankness in saying, "Should I be mistaken I wish to be refuted."

It is not with any hope of convincing you that you are mistaken that I write you, but simply as a friend desirous that you know exactly my opinion and my point of view, for I have given the question a great deal of thought.

You may think that my thirty-four years' residence in France has prejudiced me, but you must not forget that I was born and educated in America, and am still an American, while I cannot forget that you are an ex-officer of the German army and an ardent promulgator of "German culture."

I note that you criticize English and French papers, though you make quotations from them, when it serves your purpose, of what seem to me unquestionable fabrications.

Undoubtedly a large part of what we read in the daily press is pure fancy, but from my own experience in talking with the wounded, with refugees, and people back from the front, to say nothing of unimpeachable documents, I am absolutely convinced that there have been horrible atrocities, cold-blooded cruelties and flagrant injustice, to say nothing of wanton, needless destruction far surpassing what any journalist has been able to picture. But when we add to this the thousands of killed, the hundreds of thousands wounded and maimed for life, the millions of innocent sufferers, men, women and children, the billions of dollars' worth of property and business enterprise wantonly thrown away, it staggers one. What a "Great Illusion."

But this is not all. Think of the hatred engendered among civilized people, more extensive and bitter than any example you can cite in history. For if you correctly describe the enthusiasm in Germany, you must remember that in France it is the same thing. Here there are no parties, no discords, every man, woman and child believes they are fighting for their very existence; and it is the same in Belgium, England and Russia.

Now all this convinces me that we are witnessing the most momentous crisis in the world's history, only comparable with that of the long drawn-out Reformation. What will it lead to? I hope and believe to international and compulsory arbitration, *which is my dream*; especially do I hope for this where questions of honor are at stake, for I can conceive of no question of honor being justly settled when a rat terrier kills a mouse or even a tabby cat.

It is, as you know, a long and complicated story which has led to the present situation. Volumes have been and will be written on the subject. I will simply refer to one or two of the points whereon I differ from you.

But first there is one point, and I think in this we agree; perhaps nobody will be found to differ from us; and that is that Germany has built up the most marvelous army the world has ever seen. When war broke out it had reached its maximum strength in numbers, in discipline, in armament and preparedness for a sudden call. Never before was such a magnificent fighting machine conceived of.

Now from what I have read, heard and seen, it is my opinion that more marvelous still is the way in which Germany has disciplined everything, thought, science, art, industry and commerce, to one purpose, the greatness and power of Germany. Every man, woman and child is convinced of its incomparable superiority on all points to any other nation. By the way, a little logic should lead us to the conclusion, that during the present crisis the German press has been censored, and calumnies and untruths have been circulated with a system and thoroughness not possible by any other people. I say this with no sarcastic spirit. Were I a German I should likely be proud of it, for all Germans are; but as an independent I can only say that if you bar the military part of it, the rest would sooner or later be counterbalanced in other countries.

Militarism, pure and simple, or disciplined brute force, I consider fit only for savages, whether it be in Germany, France, England or the United States, and there is some of it everywhere; but

when carried to the extent Germany has carried it it becomes abhorrent and should be suppressed.

It is this military spirit, this confidence in their army and brute force that makes so many Germans unsympathetic. There is little doubt in my mind that what made the German people so enthusiastic over this war, was the universal conviction that they would swallow the French army at a gulp and leisurely chew up Russia without any serious resistance; and their sudden and intense hatred of England is only due to the fact that they think it interferes with their little pleasure trip.

You say the dream of your life has been a federation of "England and the United States centering about Germany" to insure the peace of the world. Possibly some people think that France England and Russia should be intrusted with the job, and I think their chances of success not less probable.

It is this conception of the incomparable superiority of "German culture" and German righteousness, giving her the right to dominate and direct the world, that staggers me. After all, is not Germany, as a world power, and a great nation, a mushroom growth of fifty years' standing? Has no other nation a culture, a history, men of worth? Can you not respect in others a spirit of independence and patriotism, even of national pride, however small that nation may be? And you would entrust the domination and control to one nation or group of nations. No, Dr. Carus, no nation ever has been or ever will be so near God as to be worthy of that mission, and I believe my dream nearer realization than yours.

Contrary to you, I believe Austria's ultimatum to Servia the immediate cause of this war. One man and one man only could have stopped it between the 28th and 30th of July, and that man is the German Emperor. That ultimatum and the violation of the neutrality of Belgium are the two dominating facts of the crisis. All your history going back to Cæsar, and all your precedents, carry no weight with me. The crisis is here and so momentous that it behooves humanity to cry halt, and in some way make the repetition of two such atrocities impossible. When that is done there is a possibility of the commencement of the realization of my dream, and not before.

I am not an Englishman, but all the arguments put forward to prove that England brought on this war, seem to me silly twaddle. It is my opinion that if Germany had had a diplomat of the caliber of Sir Edward Grey, the war would not have been entered upon as it was.

I believe the world has greatly changed for the better during the last hundred years, the mentality of the lower classes as well as of the upper has developed, but you would seem to think that Germany alone has progressed.

The majority of thinking Frenchmen, while proud of the genius of Napoleon, admit that what he represented was doomed to failure. Similarly I believe that in a hundred years from now German thinkers and historians will feel humiliated when they read that famous "Appeal to Civilized Nations" signed by ninety-three of the most illustrious savants of Germany. Among other things they say: "Without our militarism our civilization would have been annihilated long ago," and "The German army and the German people are one." Evidently they have a different conception of German civilization and German culture from what I should like to see them pride themselves in. These ninety-three German savants will not help much towards the realization of my dream.

The intellectual element in France is as enthusiastic over real "German Culture" as Germans themselves. Goethe, Beethoven, Kant, etc. will live even if Germany and every German living were blotted out of existence. There is no need of a German army or a German navy to impose them on people of real culture.

One may differ from others, but I see no reason, when convictions are sincere, why they should alter friendship.

Yours very sincerely,

JOHN STEEL.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS.

While it is true that I was born in Germany and am an ex-officer of the German army, I claim emphatically that it is not without good reason that I am pro-German in this war. I took a positively anti-German position at the time of the Manila troubles, and I know that the larger number of German Americans were on the same side. I am not blind to certain German shortcomings, and I concede that many Germans present themselves to foreigners in a most unfavorable light.

I agree with Mr. Steel that the worst feature of the war is the hatred engendered between the various nationalities, and the worst hatred has originated where I lament it most, between Germany and England. I recognize that this hatred has been fostered in certain circles and in certain yellow journals; but it seems to me,

and facts confirm it, that in England this spirit has taken hold of the government, while the German government has done its best to come to an amicable understanding. Since England supported the Slavs and the French, popular indignation in Germany has so much increased that the Germans feel friendly toward the French and indifferent toward the Russians, but extremely bitter toward the English. It will be long before this hostility can be overcome. I have read in German papers that while the Germans in the field are on terms of hostile comradeship along the French lines, while they exchange little courtesies and under certain conditions abstain from hostilities, this spirit is absolutely lacking where the English are concerned, and a similar odium of the English has also been noticed among the French prisoners of war who express a strong aversion to their British fellows detained in the same camp.

Mr. Steel's view of German militarism seems to me strongly influenced by French and English representations of it. I know German militarism in its good aspect and all I can concede is that there are some blustering Germans who lack the necessary discretion and naturally make a very offensive impression upon foreigners; but I wish to insist that such unpleasant individuals exist in all nations, and I believe many Americans traveling abroad have often had occasion to feel ashamed of some of their fellow countrymen who have made themselves offensive when touring through Europe. The French as a rule are least blatant because wherever they make a display of national conceit it is done with such a child-like vanity that they appear amiable even in a display of their faults.

The dream of my life has indeed been an alliance between England, Germany and the United States, but I did not think the others should be "centered" about Germany. Smaller nations would form groups about each of the three. Mr. Steel has read the passage hastily, for what I said was that "if these three groups of nations, centering about Germany, England and the United States, stand together, the peace of the world will be assured."

Mr. Steel has given his conception of my view, and I will say that for different reasons I do not deem either the French or the Russians fit to sway the destinies of the world. Both are peculiarly liable to be prejudiced in their judgment of others. Neither can understand a foreigner; and I begin to fear that the British are little better in this regard. It is a great mistake to consider Germany's advance in the last fifty years as the whole of German history. The development of German strength is not a "mushroom growth," as Mr. Steel thinks. It is the slow development of a

healthy and vigorous race under most unfavorable conditions. The Germans were deprived of the results of their labor again and again, until, under the most dire stress of necessity, they developed what is now called militarism for the sake of self-defense. Now that they have become strong they are blamed for defending themselves and overthrowing their enemies.

I have never declared that the Teutonic race should be the sole arbiter of the world's history. On the contrary I have emphasized again and again that other nations, such as the French, and even such smaller ones as Switzerland, Holland, Sweden, and Norway, etc., have made most valuable contributions to the development of a world-civilization. At the same time civilization in these is not based on blood, that is, on the closeness of their relationship to the Teutonic people.¹ Please consider that France has constantly received a strong admixture of German blood, not only before Cæsar conquered Gaul, not only when the Franks, the Burgundians, the Visigoths, the Normans, and Alamans settled in Gaul, but also in recent times. Paris and other cities are constantly flooded with German immigrants, and the importance of this immigration should not be underrated.

I can only say that I differ as to the facts concerning Mr. Steel's statement that the German Emperor could have prevented the war by not standing by Austria against the regicide propaganda of pan-Slavism, vigorously and, I am sorry to say, ignominiously supported by Sir Edward Grey.

Together with this letter of Mr. Steel I am in receipt of a statement by Americans living in Munich who proclaim in most vigorous terms their support of the German cause on the ground that "England is *directly responsible* for, and must share the guilt of, this terrible war," saying that "at the most critical hour in the history of European civilization, England arrayed herself on the side of Servian regicide and in the interest of Russian autocracy and barbarism."

¹ See for instance my explanation of "Germandom" in the December number of *The Open Court*, pp. 769-772.