

MR. JOURDAIN'S NOTE ON THE WAR.

BY THE EDITOR.

WHEN the editor of *The Open Court* came to the conclusion that the present crisis in international politics should be discussed, he thought at once of having an article published which would represent the position opposite to his own. He himself, who has always been a strong and outspoken friend of the English, has taken the German position and has done so for reasons set forth in the October issue of *The Open Court*. There is scarcely anything gained by attempting to defend either Russia or France, for their motives in entering into the war are plain. We are interested to learn the reasons which have moved England to join Russia and France in this tremendous struggle.

For a number of years the Open Court Publishing Company has been in correspondence with Mr. Philip E. B. Jourdain, a scholar of English training in close touch with the University of Cambridge, and we take pleasure in presenting on another page his "Note on the European War," but must confess that the amiable character of Mr. Jourdain has prevented him from speaking out his mind with special vigor, though he feels very strongly the justice of England's cause. We quote from a private letter the following passage: "For myself, the whole of the proceedings which led to the war seems to be to bear so strongly against Germany that I cannot believe that England can be considered as an instigator of the war or to have entered the fight through any but honorable motives."

In another letter Mr. Jourdain regards as the main reason of the war the difference between the English and the German people, saying that the English are superior to Germany in the development of individualism and have an innate dislike for German militarism. Mr. Jourdain has strong English sympathies, and I assume as a matter of course that the large majority in England feel as strongly as he, if not more so, that English politics are just. The editor of *The Open Court* himself feels just as vigorously that Great Britain

has done wrong, and if the people of England do not know why Germany feels so bitter against Great Britain, it is simply because they are not sufficiently informed about the secret treaties and the motives which have led the British cabinet to declare war.

Mr. Jourdain expresses the conviction of the English people as to the causes of the war as follows: "The first is an obligation of honor, an obligation to protect the neutrality of Belgium." Certainly it is an obligation of honor to Belgium to declare war, in view of prior promises and the inducements offered her to join the Triple Entente against Germany. If the documents found at Brussels and Antwerp which prove a secret understanding between England and Belgium are not falsified by the German authorities who claim to have them in their possession, the English were indeed in honor bound to come to the rescue of Belgium. But was it right to enter into this secret understanding? The English government did it, not the English people. The English people knew nothing of it and cannot be accused of having made these promises with France and Russia and afterwards with Belgium. I feel strongly convinced that the people would have objected to all of these entangling alliances.

In England the spread of democracy is apparent, not real. The English government has taken care to make the people believe in the prevalence of democracy among them, but democracy does not exist in fact. In Germany the people take a much greater part in politics and are a factor which the government must reckon with, while in England the opinion of the people can easily be ignored: in fact it *is* ignored and the masses of the people are absolutely indifferent to the foreign policy of the empire. Liberty in England is a fiction and only concerns the personal freedom of a man in his house—what he shall eat and drink and how he shall amuse himself, the laws which touch the price of bread, and labor questions. In imperial matters the people's interest scarcely goes beyond the question of home rule in Ireland.

I do not doubt the love of liberty in England. Nor do I doubt that every man there is free to pursue his business, and every farmer is master of his own fields and determines what he shall sow and what he shall do with his earnings; but he has no right, not even the slightest chance, to influence the politics of the country. He is kept in ignorance and is satisfied to be told that Great Britain is the freest country in the world.

The English hate militarism because they dislike the idea of service in the army. In my opinion it would be as good for the

English as for any other people in the world to serve in the army and be educated in strict obedience to duty whatever that duty may be, to learn something of manhood and be ready to come to the defense of their country. No doubt the English aspire to be gentlemen, and I must confess that great numbers of them become gentlemen, which makes it so pleasant to deal with them; but it would be to their own interest if they would attain to the higher ideal of becoming "men," and military service is a very practical method of imparting manhood to both the over-refined dude of the city and the awkward son of the farmer.

German militarism has been misrepresented in English periodicals all over the world. Above all, it is not known that German militarism makes the German people peaceful. It is one of the falsest statements to picture the Germans as aggressive and warlike. There is no German father or mother in the empire, nor any person of responsibility, who would not prefer to keep peace even at a sacrifice, for they know that their own sons, their own brothers, their own sons-in-law have to go to war to defend the country. It is a gross misstatement of the truth to represent Germany as going to war simply for the sake of waging war, either for glory, or in sheer aggressiveness, or for conquest. The present enthusiasm for the German cause is to be lauded the higher since there is no one in Germany who does not have to make sacrifices of the gravest kind. How many families have lost their only sons! and Germans of high culture, as young professors at the universities, are compelled to face the guns and sabres of the negro Turkos in the west or of the savage Cossacks in the east.

The Germans are fully convinced that it is England's policy that has encouraged both France and Russia to start the war, and only those who do not know the significance of the military institutions in Germany can expect that militarism should be abolished. If England possessed the same institutions of militarism as exist in Germany, the British government would never have dared to start the war, for the people would have censured it severely.

As to Mr. Jourdain's statement that the king of England is merely "nominal," I will say that the German emperor and king of Prussia has no more rights than the king of England, and infringes as little upon the liberty of the people. On the contrary, in case of war he cannot begin a war without the consent of all the people, including his political opponents, the social democrats who form about one-third of the *Reichstag*; and the idea that he is a tyrant who forces his people is utterly unfounded, for

the social democrats would not fight unless they felt the necessity of going to war. The Kaiser is not purely nominal; he has serious duties to perform. We may grant that he still regards himself as wearing the crown by God's grace, but whatever errors he may still entertain as to his divine rights, we must recognize that he is deeply impressed with his responsibility, and he interprets his office, thus held by the grace of God, as an obligation, a sacred trust, a religious duty, a right in which he is accountable to his conscience before God. Not even his enemies doubt that the Emperor is sincere, and that, however mistaken he may be in his views, he is honest and attends fearlessly to duty.

It is easy enough to ridicule the Kaiser for his frequent use of the word "God," and I would not deny that he lays himself open to criticism, but the impartial observer who has followed his life cannot but interpret this habit as the expression of a deep-seated conviction. The word "God" is no hypocrisy on the lips of the Emperor. It is a truthful expression of his attitude of heart.

Militarism has not been forced on the German people by the Kaiser, but by historic conditions, mainly by the danger which has threatened Germany from France, just as the origin of the German navy was due to the conviction that one of these days Great Britain would fall upon German, exactly as she has now done.

The German authorities saw the growth of the German mercantile fleet and encouraged it; knowing how Great Britain had dealt with Holland in former times, they felt that a navy was needed for the defense of their colonies. If they were wrong, was it not wrong for the British to reserve for themselves the right to have a navy? Never and nowhere has Germany shown any intention of falling upon English colonies as England fell upon New Amsterdam in North America and Cape Town in South Africa.

Liberty of speech as it exists in England, so humorously characterized by Mr. Jourdain in the permission given a violent orator to have his say in Trafalgar Square, is being tried in all Germanic countries, but there is a most serious other side, and England has naturally been forced now and then to restrict free speech, while Germany has learned to allow it. Yet have not the violent speeches of reckless orators caused much harm in the world? I will only remind our readers of the assassination of President McKinley, who was shot by a Slav that had been incited by violent anarchistic speeches to commit the deed. Who is the real criminal, the inflammatory orator who put the idea into the degenerate brain of Czolgosz, or the assassin himself?

Considering such incidents I do not blame a government for restricting free speech under certain conditions, and I remember that this was done in England at the time of the Boer war. At that time I was passing through London and attended a meeting of protest held in the club rooms of a liberal society, where the British government was denounced in the most violent terms. I tried to speak up for England and England's glory in preserving the ideal of liberty of speech, when I was hooted at and could not finish. The audience shouted, "There is no freedom in England!" and informed me that mass meetings had been broken up by the police; members of the club declared they had been ejected from meeting halls and bodily injured.

I have always spoken up for England. I like English people and enjoy their company. It is but natural that I have always justified their position when possible or at least made excuses for them against accusations that had some basis in fact. I have preached friendship for England in Germany and the United States and have encouraged the establishment of a Triple Alliance between the three countries in the interest of universal peace on earth.¹

I recognize the superiority of England in many points, especially in her successful methods of building up colonies which the Germans have yet to learn; I admire the executive ability of the English, and their far-reaching but often questionable diplomacy, in which the Germans are sorely lacking; and I have also unstinted praise for the English language, originally a Saxon (that is to say, a Low German) dialect which is unsurpassed in its simplicity of construction. But with all my admiration for the British I cannot help thinking that, like most of England's prior wars, the present war is not only a great wrong but a great blunder, for it will prove a dire calamity to Great Britain. How foolish it was for Edward VII to originate the anti-German movement at the time of the formation of the Triple Entente, was brought home to me when I saw in an American Sunday issue an article on the German family that has ruled England ever since the Hanoverian kings were called to ascend the throne. There in a cartoon stood Tommy Atkins, full page size, gaudy in his red uniform, holding on his hand a little figure of Lilliputian size representing German royalty on the English throne. Admiral Battenberg had to quit the service because he is of German descent. Why, the article said, should not George V follow him, on the ground that his grandfather was

¹ See for instance my address before the first congress of the *Verein aller deutschen Studenten*, published in the Proceedings of the society.

of German birth and his grandmother's family was imported from Hanover?

I will not enter into the details of Mr. Jourdain's exposition, although I differ from some of them, for instance his statement as to art, music and science. I believe that Germany ranks high in music, but the latest development in Russia ought not to be overlooked nor the prior merits of Italy. Germany is not the only country where music has been developed. On the other hand I do not believe that "hardly anything in the arts of sculpture and painting is due to Germany." I believe that Germany still ranks higher than France; and the sculpture in public places in England can scarcely be classed as art.

Germany has always been highly appreciative of the accomplishments of other nations, and I believe there is no country in the world where the latest books of merit of all countries are so frequently translated and so widely read as in Germany. Next to Germany ranks England, and I will further add that all the other Germanic nations rank very high and surpass the Romance nations considerably in many respects.

Certainly no one can regret the war more than myself, but I will add that according to a practical consideration of all the facts and, as far as that be possible, from an impartial standpoint, I blame England first of all for the outbreak. It is plain to me that England has created among English speaking people, the United States not excepted, an anti-German movement. England has founded the Triple Entente which, although it is not in the interest of England, allies England with two nations naturally antagonistic to her. Russia did not even discontinue her intrigues against Great Britain after the establishment of the Triple Entente, in Tibet as well as in Persia, Afghanistan and even India, but the men who hated Germany have set aside every other consideration for the sake of crushing Germany first. I believe that the ill-will created by the war among the different European nationalities is a great misfortune and will not so easily be set aside even after the conclusion of peace; and England will reap a very sorry harvest. That the French do not love the English became apparent in the treatment Sir Edward Grey's brother received from his fellow prisoners. The famous German chant of hatred proves that whereas the German fight against France and Russia it a sportsmanlike affair—a shot for a shot and a blow for a blow—England is blamed as giving a shot in the back. England has become the hated foe, and I fear it will be a long time before this sentiment can be outgrown.

I deem it highly necessary for the development of mankind that we have several great nationalities, and that in addition we have a number of smaller states which are independent and follow their own free government. The different nationalities complement each other, and the smaller states have frequently contributed very important ideas or interpretations of life to the development of humanity; and I will say that the German empire has practically solved the problem of having a strong union combined with individual development of the different small German states. The unity of the German empire has beyond any question been established through the political needs of self-defense, but the Bavarian considers himself very different from the Prussian, the Swabian again is different from his neighbor, the inhabitant of Baden, and likewise even the different provinces of Prussia cling each to its own peculiar individuality. In the same way this individualistic development in Germany is carried into the family life, and I have nowhere in the world found such a variety of character and of conviction as in the German fatherland.

I must insist therefore that the present characterization of German conditions in English, and often also in American papers, is very unfair, and, as it seems to me, due to an intentional misrepresentation in order to create a prejudice against Germany.

Mr. Jourdain concludes his article with an appreciation of *The Open Court* and *The Monist*, and I have not ventured to remove it in order to let his article be as independent as I intended that it should be. If I had known that he would praise my work, I would have asked him to omit it, but as he has done so, I wish my readers would regard it as but a manifestation of our author's amiability.

In conclusion I will repeat that I am not anti-British. On the contrary, I am in a sense pro-British. But while I am a friend of the English, while I fully appreciate their good qualities, I have a decided and well-founded conviction that the British government is guilty of this war, that this war will not bring any blessings to Great Britain, in short, that it is against all the interests of the British empire, of Great Britain and of the English people. It will prevent the progress of civilization and the peaceful cooperation of the three most powerful countries of the world, Germany, Great Britain and the United States, and is greatly to be deplored. It is not Germany that is guilty of the war, but the men who brought about the Triple Entente, an understanding which made it inevitable that England should feel in honor bound to inflict injury upon Germany—an injury which will recoil upon her own head.