

FATE AND THE WAR.

BY THE EDITOR.

IT almost appears as if Friedrich von Bernhardi had made the present war. No books of his have appeared until recently, and he was little known as an author before his death in 1913. One of his books, "On the Customs of War," was published in 1902, but it was merely an official statement of the German General Staff for public information. His main work, entitled "Germany and the Next War," which appeared in 1912 in the midst of peace, now sounds like a prophecy, and the contents of this book have been popularized in a still more recent book (published in 1913) entitled "Our Future—A Word of Warning to the German Nation." General Bernhardi was apparently an able general, and also a keen diplomat who had studied the history of nations, their wars, their rise and decline and ever-shifting positions in the world, to such an extent as to make him a most able judge of national development in the history of mankind. That he, a German general, should have proved to be a true German patriot is surely deserving only of commendation; that he was a good writer must likewise be counted in his favor; but if we are to consider him as a prophet, his rôle has truly been a terrible one, for his prophecy seems to have been almost fatalistic in its consequences. But I will add here that, as Herr Dernburg claims, Bernhardi's pessimistic utterances and his assistance in the movement for increased armaments were not approved by the German government, and caused his discharge.

In spite of his high rank in the army and his position in the General Staff, Friedrich von Bernhardi was little known in Germany. His warning, though in some places obviously directed against the peace policy of the Kaiser, was not specially heeded by the German people, and as an author he remained unknown to fame. Unfortunately, however, his second book was translated into English, the work being done by J. Ellis Barker who did not hesitate to change its title, "Our Future—A Word of Warning to

the German Nation," into the more alarming words, *Britain as Germany's Vassal*. This change is not just to the author, for there is not a word in Bernhardi's book which suggests the idea of making Britain a vassal of Germany. On the contrary it is a book, as Bernhardi himself says, of "warning to the Germans," and he claims that Germany stands at that point of her development where she has to decide for herself whether she will remain a continental power of secondary importance or whether she will continue her course of expansion and become a world-power possessing colonies, like England and the United States.

General Bernhardi recently undertook a journey round the world to gather impressions, and he passed through the United States; but though he had then finished his literary career, he was unknown. His presence here did not create even a ripple of excitement, and there are few who saw his name mentioned in the papers. He became famous only since the translation of his books created a stir in England; and an Englishman can well shudder with fear as he contemplates the need of Germany's expansion and the native vigor of her teeming millions demanding also their share of space on this globe. On the other hand, Bernhardi points out England's established policy of refusing to tolerate the growth of another naval power and of antagonizing whichever state happens to be the most powerful in continental Europe.

England and Germany have formerly been united by the closest ties of national relationship and the personal kinship of their rulers. For several centuries the English royal family has hailed from Germany, and has been related to the houses of Hanover, Saxony, Coburg and Prussia. The present King of England and the Kaiser are cousins. Queen Victoria was the grandmother of both, and if the laws of succession were slightly modified or some of the Queen's descendants had unexpectedly died, or had not been born, both thrones might be held by the same man.

The English language, a daughter of Anglo-Saxon speech, is practically a Low German dialect, and the Low Germans of the northern part of the fatherland constitute the dominant and, in military matters, the most efficient portion of northern Germany. The English people come from the territory where formerly Saxon or Low German was spoken, and the Lowland Scots are of the same race. The Saxons conquered the Celtic portions of Britain, and also Ireland, and though they form only about one-third of the population of Great Britain they have impressed upon the remainder their language and national character.

At present the inhabitants of Great Britain are about 45,000,000, but with a very far-sighted and practical policy they have succeeded in acquiring the most important inhabitable portions of the globe, such as southern Africa, Australia, Canada and India, and at the same time have possessed themselves of all important naval bases, chief among them being the Suez Canal together with Aden at the end of the Red Sea, and Malta, and Gibraltar.

England's position is practically that of ruler of the ocean, and with great foresight the English have always insisted on having the strongest navy in the world. In modern politics England has always opposed any nation likely to develop a powerful navy, and so it was perhaps inevitable that Great Britain should be arrayed against Germany notwithstanding her old blood-ties with that country, the kinship of their royal families, and all their common historical interests, and should side with her old enemy, France, and even with Russia, so dangerous to England everywhere in Asia. She has allied herself with these for the sole purpose of checking the more systematic and therefore more formidable advance of Germany.

The German danger was pointed out by an anonymous pen in two articles which appeared in the *London Saturday Review*¹ and which must be mentioned here because their underlying principles have guided English politics; they have led to the establishment of the Triple Entente, and they explain the plan of an English invasion of France through Belgium and the determination to have Germany crushed between France and Russia while England destroyed Germany's trade and starved the whole country into submission, a plan which it was expected would be very easy and one whose execution was urged while it was still feasible.

The English apprehension of the German danger was the real cause of the war; the Servian quarrel was only the occasion on which Russian eagerness to assert its Pan-Slavic ambition with the help of the Triple Entente grew bold enough to start the trouble, and the German breach of Belgian neutrality furnished England a pretext to join in the general fray.

In former articles I have defended Germany for standing by Austria in her determination to have the conspiracy of the regicide fully investigated, and I have also maintained that, in view of the fact that she was threatened with an invasion through Belgium, Germany was justified in attempting a passage through this no longer neutral territory. There is no need of re-opening the dis-

¹ See *The Open Court* for October, 1914, p. 577, and December, 1914, p. 719.

cussion on this problem. Since we know that England herself had intended to break into Germany through Belgium, Germany's action is perfectly justified. I assume that every one who wishes to investigate the situation with impartiality will familiarize himself with the documents discovered at Brussels, which do not admit of any other interpretation than that Belgium had joined with England and France in the project of an attack on Rhenish Germany. In connection with this we refer to the letter of Baron Greindl, at that time Belgian ambassador at Berlin, who warns his government against the danger to which such a step would expose them. England saw no wrong in breaking Belgian neutrality with Belgium's consent, but she angrily denounces Germany for breaking it without that consent.

Baron Greindl was a Belgian patriot. He did not want to have the Germans admitted to Belgian soil; he wanted to preserve the independence of his country. For this reason he deemed it dangerous to hand the Belgian fortresses and defenses over to the British and French who were more easily invited than disposed of when no longer needed. His warnings remained unheeded and now comprise a document testifying to anti-German intrigue. Another letter of a similar purport was written July 30, 1914, by M. de l'Escaille, the Belgian ambassador at St. Petersburg. This was also found by the Germans in Brussels and was published in the *Norddeutsche Zeitung*. M. de l'Escaille recognizes that the war has been unavoidable from the time that the war party at St. Petersburg gained the upper hand, and he concludes thus:

"The army, which feels itself strong, is full of enthusiasm and relies on great hopes based on the enormous progress that has been achieved since the Japanese war. The navy is so far from having realized the program of its reconstruction and its reorganization that it can scarcely enter into the matter of reckoning. It is probably there that the motive lies which gives such great importance to the assurance of England's support."

This expectation was expressed before the Germans entered Belgium. It is clear that England wanted to throw her full weight into the balance with France and Russia. The Germans asked twice whether England would remain neutral if Belgium were left alone or if Germany promised not to attack France by sea, or, if not, what conditions would satisfy her; but Sir Edward Grey refused to commit himself and so Germany could run no risk of a hostile attack through Belgium and saw no other chance to forestall her enemies. Even then she would have guaranteed

Belgian independence if Belgium had been willing to allow her passage through Belgian territory. It was the duty of Germany to protect first of all her own citizens and so she reluctantly decided to open the war by taking Belgium, otherwise the British and French trenches might now lie round Aix-la-Chapelle or Cologne.

The English make light of the discoveries of the *Conventions anglo-belges* at Brussels, and speak of them as "an academic discussion" relating only to "the event of Belgian neutrality being infringed upon by one of its neighbors," but to a reader of these documents there is no doubt that Belgium joined England and France with definite promises and made common cause with them. The documents prove a plan to attack Germany; they mention the possibility of an attempted march of German troops through Belgium only as one eventuality, not as the condition of the whole proposition.

The question that remains is simply a problem of the future. It is this: Will Germany continue to expand, or will England's dominating power crush it before its navy is large enough to rival her own on the seas? In other words, we stand before a crisis in history. The crisis is here. But the question is, were the diplomats of England wise in having it decided by war?—for no one who has studied the diplomatic events of the last days of July, 1914, doubts that England brought about the war. Can England much longer, either by war or peace, maintain her dominant position in the world? The truth is that, apart from her forty-five millions at home, she counts not more than twenty millions of whites in her colonies—Canada, Australia, South Africa and India—to defend her vast empire, and she has not even enough sailors to man her navy—which is not surprising when we consider the constant drain there must be to keep up to the two-power standard. England is a comparatively small country, her people are not as prolific as the Germans, and her hold on her tremendous colonial possessions is more or less precarious. Ought she not, under these circumstances, to have allied herself with some virile country such as Germany, and would not both countries have benefitted thereby?

The question has been proposed, whether England, Germany and the United States could agree to stand together for a peaceful development, and have questions of right or wrong decided by mutual agreement. Of course the basic question of mutual recognition of their respective spheres should be settled at the start. This would have been the ideal solution, and it is the one we have always advocated; but it seems that the distrust between the nations

has grown too strong to permit any friendly understanding between them, for English policy has recently been very determined to put a check upon any possible aggrandizement of German colonies or colonial life. The English have also been very much opposed to the increase of Germany's navy, and, on the other hand, the Germans have been just as determined not to allow any interference with the development of their military or naval power.

Germany would have preferred to continue a peaceful competition with England like that which prevailed before the war, and from her own standpoint this would have been the better course. Germany was noticeably gaining, and England seemed either unwilling to exert herself to outdo German trade and commerce, or unable to outdo it. War finally appeared to the British government to be the only chance of suppressing the German danger.

If two nations are actually unwilling to allow each other free development the result must be war, and in this sense we speak of the war as having been unavoidable. It is not a question of right, it is a question of might.

In studying the facts closely, and in trying to understand what the English and the sponsors of their policy mean by the "aggressiveness" of Germany, we conclude that it is Germany's unwelcome advance in population, in trade, in power, in influence, in wealth, etc., by which it may rival England. No wonder they deem it intolerable. The question is only whether it is wise to check their intolerable aggressiveness by war. I believe it would have been wiser to compete with Germany by adopting German methods and striving to outdo the Germans in their peaceful accomplishments, by imitating their schools, by fostering science and teaching the growing generation to apply themselves in a severer attention to the duties of life.

Another feature of modern Germany which the English find unpleasant is her militarism. They would much prefer to see her helpless. But this very institution of universal military service is the strength of Germany, and it is this that renders her invincible. It is Germany's backbone. If England wants to continue this war she will have to adopt universal military service, and she could not do better than imitate the much denounced German militarism as speedily as possible.

England has chosen the war, not Germany! England was unprepared for the war for she thought it would be an easy game. Her former wars have been easy, and this war too seemed as sure; and it was a matter of course to crush any power that threatened

to grow stronger and richer than herself. In the Triple Entente with all its secret implications and corollaries, they believed, lay their weapon for the isolation and strangulation of Germany. From the English point of view, however, I do not condemn them for the course they have pursued, for they certainly have ample cause for apprehension; and from the old standpoint of Macchiavellian statecraft there is no right or wrong in diplomacy. But even from their point of view their diplomacy has been grossly deceived; the Triple Entente will not accomplish what they hoped for; and the disaster which they have planned for Germany will recoil on their own heads.

The present situation appears like the work of fate. Similar conditions have repeated themselves in history. And is it to be wondered at that the Kaiser, though he did his utmost to preserve peace, should finally be forced into this conflict against his will? It is as if the German people had been compelled to come forth in all their might to show themselves worthy of becoming a world-power.

The Germans are naturally a peaceful people. Their much denounced militarism is positively a peaceful institution, for it means that every father, son and brother must fight the battles of his country. If England possessed this system the English people would have been considerably less vociferous in their clamors for war.

Germany has accepted the challenge, not for the sake of gaining a new and larger position in the world, but simply to maintain her old hold and to ward off the invaders to the west and the east. Here, however, appears a new factor in history. England has become the main enemy of Germany, and it will be very difficult, if possible at all, to eradicate the intense hatred which has suddenly arisen in Germany against their cousins beyond the channel.

A university professor whose only son and all of whose sons-in-law are in the field writes: "We pity the French and are sorry that the Belgians were so misguided; we regret that our men have to pit their lives against the Cossacks. But we feel a positive hostility toward the English. They have become the arch-enemy of Germany and we know that peace, an honorable peace, will be possible only if we succeed in humbling Albion. We shall probably fight against France and Russia only until we can establish ourselves on foreign soil in a secure defensive position, and then we will concentrate all our forces against England."

Another friend of mine, also a university professor, a scholar

highly respected also in English-speaking countries, writes as follows:

"Our losses on the battlefield, especially in the west, are terrible, but how is it with the enemy? We have to fight hard for every foot of territory we gain, but even if the struggle is slow no one doubts here but we shall win in the end; for there is but one enemy, and that is England. She is not only our enemy, but the enemy of mankind.

"You have not the slightest idea of the intense hatred against England which moves all Germany. Since documents have been found in Brussels proving a compact made between Belgium and England, a plan according to which Belgium would allow English troops to march through Belgian territory into the Rhenish provinces of Germany, indignation, wrath and contempt for British hypocrisy knows no limits among us. And yet the English government could take Germany's breach of Belgium's neutrality as a reason for declaring war, whereas the English and French had broken it long before.

"England is the instigator of the whole war and of all the unspeakable misery which has been brought not only upon innocent Germany, but also upon the allies themselves, the Belgians and the French. The most simple-minded man in the *Landwehr* and every peasant knows this to be the case, so that for centuries the deadliest hatred against England will remain the most sacred inheritance in every German family, to be handed down from father to son.

"And what will be the harvest of this terrible crop of hatred? Even if peace could be obtained now, this hatred will remain, and the thought of England as the cause of all this horror will not be blotted out in future generations. It will produce new seeds for future wars, and the representatives of the German people will always be ready to grant any number of millions needed for preparing attacks upon England. Our armies see the need of conquering the Russians in the east and the French in the west, but all their ambition burns for a humiliation of England, and *they will succeed!* Nothing is more apparent than the degeneration of that ruthless nation, and careful observers have noticed the several symptoms which show the lowering of their national conscience, of which every day brings new evidences."

The hatred of England which has suddenly developed in Germany is explicable only through England's sudden and unexpected declaration of war, an act which showed conclusively that Eng-

land had definitely determined that Germany's commercial and naval development should receive a crushing blow. Previous to the summer of 1914, there was not the slightest animosity towards England among the great majority of Germans. The report that the most popular toast in certain circles in Germany since the time of Edward VII has been *Der Tag* or *Die Stunde* (referring to the day or hour when Germany should finally settle accounts with England) is absolutely unknown to me, although I have been in Germany repeatedly and should certainly have seen something of this bellicose attitude had it existed. In certain quarters in Germany, it is true, there has always been an antagonism to England, but the idea of a war with that country has never been prevalent in military circles. Possibly such a toast may have been offered in the German navy, as might just as easily be the case in any other navy since England is practically the only possible opponent on the seas; but it certainly could not have been in general use in the army. Some one may possibly have witnessed such a toast in some corner, but, if so, it was certainly an exception and does not represent the general spirit before August, 1914.

Whatever my English friends have said in their accusations of Germany has only confirmed my conviction that Germany is right in being what she is to-day, and that the steps she has taken in self-defense are justified. One of my friendly critics ends his private letter with the following postscript: "When Germany shall have lost all her navy, all her colonies, all Polish Prussia, she will be greater than ever spiritually—greater in the things which made her great in 1813—and 1870 also."

I grant that Germany was great in the beginning of the nineteenth century; it was the Germany of Goethe, Schiller, Mozart, Beethoven, etc. Napoleon's armies were garrisoned in the country, and the people were impoverished by unendurable war-taxes; yet Germany was great, and accomplished things that will be immortal. It is this state of Germany that the English would like to restore, helpless but noble, poor but ideal, downtrodden by her invaders but famous for poetry and science. Such is the idea of my friend, Mr. Poultney Bigelow. Perhaps the historian of the future will declare that Germany in her greatest distress in 1806-1813 was greater than in her military glory and in the restoration of the empire in 1871; but, after all, I can not blame the Germans for taking steps to prevent the return of this humiliating state of purely ideal greatness. The Triple Entente was concluded to check Germany's growth, and the question now is not whether the Serbs

should or should not be allowed to assassinate the heirs to the throne of Austria, or whether the Belgians have or have not the right to allow the English and forbid the Germans to march through Belgium. The question is whether the Triple Entente can crush Germany, and I say they will not succeed.

As best, from the English standpoint, the war will fizzle out in a drawn state of hostility without reaching a definite decision. The hope in which the war was undertaken and which seemed so easy of realization—the hope that Germany could be crushed between the French and the Russians—will scarcely be fulfilled and becomes more and more improbable. On the other hand it becomes more and more apparent that Germany suffers less through her isolation than England, whose trade is also crippled through the war. On the one hand the Germans adapt themselves more easily to new conditions which really are not worse than a prohibitive tariff (so highly praised by protectionists in this country), and, on the other hand, England suffers as much, perhaps more, through this patriotic destruction of trade and in addition runs greater risks. Her domination in India, South Africa and Egypt seems pretty well established, but it may be shaken at any time, and if so, it will probably collapse. The war is a test of Germany, but it will prove equally a test of those who are responsible for the war, and above all of England. And it seems to me very doubtful whether England will stand the test. It is strange that my English friends do not see the question from this point of view.

Wars are not made by kings or emperors, nor are they made by the people. They come upon mankind like fate. They seem predestined. When they first break upon us they have a stultifying effect and all manner of insane hates are engendered; but as time passes on the wounds heal—though sometimes slowly, as for instance after the Thirty Years' War—new times and conditions arise, new generations come on, and, forgetful of the past, the development of mankind progresses along fresh channels. If mankind stood on a higher plane, if the leaders in European politics had commanded a broader vision, the war might have been avoided, but, as conditions were, it was inevitable. We inhabitants of the United States can only regret this struggle, for we are closely allied to both England and Germany, and we feel keenly the terrible losses on both sides. And for the outcome,—*nous verrons ce que nous verrons!*