THE NIGHT.

ENGLISH DIPLOMACY AND THE TRIPLE ENTENTE.¹

A PHANTASMAGORIA IN ONE ACT

BY BARRIE AMERICANUS NEUTRALIS

CHARACTERS

King Edward
British Premier
John, the King's valet

The Witch of Time
Pages

In Vision:

Kaiser Wilhelm II
Czar of Russia
President of France
Russian General

King George V
Bismarck
Officers, Soldiers, etc.

The King's dressing room in the palace. A dressing table with a large mirror on one side. John, the King's valet, places the several toilet utensils, brushes, powder-box, rouge, nail-clip and file in order on the dressing-table, first using all the articles on himself.

John. When next these things are used it will be on a crowned king, but of course I have used them first on myself. I am very close to His Majesty,—I had almost said "His Royal Highness." So far my master has been Prince of Wales, but now he is King of England, and I must become accustomed to saying "Your Majesty." Of course I have risen with him. Henceforth I am "Valet to His Majesty King Edward the Seventh." It is time he was back from the

¹Sir James Matthew Barrie, the famous author of Peter Pan, has written a short dramatic poem in one act entitled "Der Tag" or The Tragic Man in which he characterizes the Kaiser as a lover of peace, but weak and under the influence of the Prussian Camarilla as represented in his minister who urges him on to war until he finally signs the fatal document and "Der Tag" breaks when war becomes unavoidable. However poetic Barrie's little play may be, it is utterly false in its premises; it misrepresents the Kaiser and his policy,
coronation. I wonder how he feels. He looks funny enough. What would his Anglo-Saxon ancestors have said of their latest successor, this stumpy follower of the fair sex! I do not blame him for his follies for he is king and can do as he pleases. And, after all, as the proverb says, no man is a hero to his valet, and I suppose it is true. But I only find fault with his bad taste. However, that is his business. It is he that has to take all the consequences. Here he comes now.

(John bows deeply. Enter the King with scepter and crown, dressed in royal ermine and purple, his train carried by pages. The pages kneel, then leave the room.)

King. At last! At last! I have been waiting long
For this momentous day which sees me crowned.
John, come and take the scepter.

(John approaches.)
Tarry a little
And leave these emblems but a moment longer
Within my grasp. They mean so very much.
Now leave me with my royal thoughts alone,
And when I ring come back and help disrobe me.

(John bows and withdraws. The King poses before the mirror.)

King. There, at last! Behold, King Edward the Seventh! I am delighted to see myself in this garb. I am the seventh of my name. Seven is a holy number, a significant number. The Archbishop said it is a sacred number and all-comprehensive. It is three plus four. "Three" means God and "four" the world. So "seven" means all, God and the world. It means completeness. There are seven wonders of the world; there are the seven colors of the rainbow; there are seven stars in the Pleiades constellation; there are the seven sages; there are seven gifts of the spirit;—and there are seven Edwards! Yes, seven kings of England of that name; and I am the seventh.

I am King of England. That means I am the ruler of

and is obviously written to exonerate Great Britain from responsibility for the war. The formation of the Triple Entente was but a preparatory step for a war on Germany which it was hoped could be finished quickly by a crushing blow dealt suddenly by the French and Russians without involving England in the evils of a war. We submit herewith a poem describing the situation as it appears to the eyes of an impartial bystander and which the author hopes reflects the truth more accurately than Sir James Barrie's appealing sketch.
Great Britain, and as ruler of Great Britain I rule the world. Britannia indeed rules the waves; the British empire extends over every sea and into every clime. It is God's gift to Old England, and that is why this scepter and this golden crown upon my head mean so much. They mean dominion over the world.

For every country that is reached by ships
Pays tribute to the mistress of the seas,
And we lay down the law to all the nations.
Could I but peer into the distant future!
I fain would see the destiny of England,
Her dangers and her triumphs—triumphs yea!
For I am sure we are the chosen people
Whom God has blessed above all other nations
To rule the world and bear the white man's burden.
Dark powers of things to come, reveal to me,
The King of England, England's destiny!

(The Witch of Time, a tall old woman, rises from the ground. She is veiled in gray.)

KING. Mysterious woman, let me see thy face!

(Witch unveils her face.)

WITCH. Thou callest me, King Edward, and I come
Out of the depth of that unfathomed night
Which shrouds the distant time. Hear thou my words,
That thou, the seventh of thy name, completest
The day of England's greatness. Evening falls,
The sun is setting on a glorious reign.
The Anglo-Saxons' queens are great, but not
Their kings, and the Victorian age is past.
Thou wouldst begin a new, more manly era,
But if thou imitateth not Prince Hal
'T will be no better, it will surely lead
Old England down—down to her sure destruction.

KING. Who art thou, dastardly old toothless woman,
Hag of the night, curse of a wayward fate?

WITCH. My name—that matters not. But heed thou well
The warning which I come to bring to thee.
God, the Omnipotent, long suffering,
The God of history, has truly blessed
The land whose guidance with this scepter is Entrusted now to thee. But have thy statesmen Used wisely and with justice their great power? Does England merit the supremacy Which has been hers? God's patience long endures, But finally He calls all to account. Art thou the man to rectify past wrongs. And lead Old England on to higher things?

**King.** What qualities are needed for the task?

**Witch.** One, merely one alone, and it is manhood.

**King.** My predecessor was a woman.

**Witch.** Yea!

**King.** I am a man!

**Witch.** Not every man has manhood.

**King.** What is thy meaning, hag? Speak plainly.

**Witch.** I mean by manhood simple honesty.

**King.** If that be all, I do not fear the task Of being King and governing the world. I think that simple honesty is good, Yea very good if it be used as mask To hide the cunning of our statecraft's art. What England needeth is diplomacy. The Hindus did not lack in honesty, But honesty is good for simpletons Who would be duped. The Irish patriots Possess enough of simple honesty, But never have they independence gained. The Chinese in their simple honesty Thought to debar our opium from their ports. The Boer insisted on his right to block The British progress; but his honesty Assuredly was of no use to him. Oh no, my good old witch, you are mistaken; On honesty Old England cannot prosper; Pure honesty is but for simpletons. We need much more—we need diplomacy.
Witch. It takes a hero to be truly honest.

King. I am no hero, but a mortal man
With human, all too human, faults. But then
I'm keen of wit and can accomplish much
By mere persuasion and by shrewd designs.
I want to be prepared for my great task
And wish to see what dangers are in store.

Witch. Great Britain has no friends; she stands alone.
Protected by the sea in isolation,
She is surrounded by great enemies.
See here the French, your foes of centuries.

(In the background, on the right side, an arch appears, like the Arch of Triumph in Paris, with the tricolor flying above it. Underneath, in dress suit, covered with a red, white and blue scarf, the President of France, surrounded by French officers in uniform. The President speaks to his generals.)

President. We hate John Bull. He is our meanest foe.
The Germans have been bad enough; they took
Alsace-Lorraine when we, all unprepared,
Still bore the yoke of the third Bonaparte:
But they at least beat us in open battle,
While England robbed us by diplomacy.
Messieurs, remember Suez and Fashoda.
Lesseps, a Frenchman, a French genius,
Built that canal with our own capital,
And now 'tis England's. 'Twas our caravan
That first crossed Africa to far Fashoda;
'Tis England now reaps all the benefit.
Therefore beware! A snake lurks in the grass
Where'er a British diplomat has stepped.
The Germans fight in fair and open battle;
The English rob us by diplomacy.

(The picture fades away.)

Witch. You have worse enemies and more than France.
Look at the Slav in his barbaric might!
All over Asia see his agents swarm.
He spins intrigues which will be difficult
For you to rend. Behold another danger—

(On the left the background opens and shows a typical Russian church entrance with a Russian General in fur coat and...
cap, with a knout in hand. At his right the Czar dressed in his imperial state; behind both, Russian soldiers and Cos-
sacks.)

General. The present age belongs to Western Europe,
To England and to Germany and France;
But soon a new and brighter morn shall break;
Soon shall we reach in our triumphant march
That ancient city of the Bosphorus,
And thence to Suez, gateway to the East;
Then Persia, helpless, and Afghanistan
Will fall before us; and at last our arms
Shall be supreme where now the Briton rules—
In India, the treasury of the East.
Let England rule the waves, we'll rule the land,
And England will be helpless 'gainst our armies,
Uncounted and invincible. Yea, sire,
Be confident. Our victory is sure.
Ere long all Asia shall be 'neath our sway,
And then in our victorious march we'll turn
Upon our western foe, the mighty Teuton.
France clamors for revenge; she'll be our friend.
Then shall the Teuton, too, bow low his knee,
And all the world be ours; in every land
Our faith shall spread, and holy Russia will
Fulfil her destiny decreed by God.

(The Russian group disappears.)

King. All these our enemies? Have we no friends?

Witch. England has nowhere friends unless the Germans.
They are your kin. But in these later days
Distrust has grown among them, for they fear
The ill designs of your diplomacy.
Germania grows apace; her sons aspire
To noble things, and greatness they achieve,
And honor and renown among all nations.
Behold the guardian spirit of her people!

(The center of the background opens, and Bismarck appears
with the young Kaiser William II.)

Kaiser. O venerable trusty counselor
Of my grandfather, let me learn from you
How I can strengthen Germany's position
That ne'er again she shall experience
The agonies of conquest as of yore;
For I would foster in our Fatherland
All sciences and arts and industries.
I shall be proud if our posterity
Will call me once the emperor of peace.

BISMARCK. Remember, *Si vis pacem para bellum.*
We are surrounded, sire, by enemies,
And by no other means is peace preserved
Than by a constant readiness for war.
The French are in alliance with the Russians
And we must learn to fight the two at once.
Since your grandfather beat the French, they've grown
In affluence and military power;
And Russia is a giant, great and mighty,
Yet, happily, but crude and barbarous,
And lacking wisdom and experience.

KAISER. War is a curse and ever fraught with danger.
As long as possible I will preserve
The benefits of peace, that so my people
May prosper in all good and useful ways,
In all things worthy of a noble race.
And should the day of trial come, God grant
That I may be the first to draw the sword.
I will be worthy of my ancestors.
I'll either wield my sword in victory
Or I will die in open field with honor.
We Germans fear but God, and nothing else.

*(The picture in the center disappears.)*

KING. Not even Germany is our good friend.
She seems more dangerous than all the rest.
In Germany there slumbers native strength,
And if her growth continues as of late
She will be England's must undaunted rival.
The others are not rivals, they are foes.
Foes may be changed by good diplomacy
So as to be of service, not so rivals;
Therefore I fear but Germany alone.
'Tis true she helped us in our recent trouble;
But then she simply did oppose the French
Lest they perchance became too strong. 'Tis true
The Russians tried to take the Dardanelles
That they from thence might threaten the canal,
And that design, too, Bismarck did defeat.
He favored us, but solely for the reason
That Russia must not be allowed to grow.
But now I have a plan; and not in vain
These phantom visions have appeared to me.
Great Britain shall be ever, as to-day,
Supreme and mistress of the seven seas.
Old witch, I bid thee gratefully farewell.

Witch. I warn thee once again to act the man.
The fate of England hangs on thy decision.

(She disappears. The King rings the bell.)

King. Come, John, take these insignia.

(He hands John the scepter.)

Here, take off the crown; it presses rather hard; and even the
robe is unwieldy; it makes me perspire. Go now and bid
the Premier come to me.

John. Your Majesty. his Excellency is waiting at the door.

King. Let him enter at once.

(Exit John.)

I hope the new Premier is to my heart.
I know at least that he is like a fox,
Cunning and smart and full of clever tricks.

(Premier shows in the Premier, bows and withdraws.)

Premier. I thought you might wish to see me, your Majesty; therefore I came uncalled.

King. Well considered and well done. I want to know what you think of the European situation.

Premier. Your noble mother has been very kind to Germany, very gracious and forbearing. She was so loving in her parental affection. The Kaiser is her grandson, and a grandmother is naturally fond of her grandchildren.

King. Yes, yes. I know. and she was proud of the young man, but though he is my nephew I must confess he does not act with
becoming modesty. His utterances on more than one occasion have been provocative and threatening. He prates overmuch of the mailed fist.

Premier. Yes, and he persists in increasing his navy.

King. His navy?

Premier. Indeed, Your Majesty. He has almost one-third as many ships now as England. His aggressiveness may become intolerable. I fear that I can say nothing better than the ancient dictum in a modern version: Caeterum censeo Germaniam esse delendam.

King. Do you know what we can do?

Premier. My plan is ready, sire.

King. Speak on.

Premier. In fact I must confess that I have taken the preliminary tentative steps.

King. Have you?

Premier. I have inquired in France and in Russia as to their plans. They will unite under all circumstances to crush Germany, and are but waiting for an opportunity. Germany is as in a vise between the two, and if we join them to ruin German trade and cut the Germans off from the rest of the world; resistance will be brief. France and Russia will be greatly encouraged to venture into a war against Germany if we give them the promise of our support and form a Triple Entente against her. There is no risk. And, Your Majesty, if Germany were extinguished to-morrow there is not an Englishman in the world who would not be the richer the day after. Neither France nor Russia is dangerous to us, for both are incapable of developing a strong navy. We have only one thing to fear and that is the growth of Germany.

King. Germania est delenda!

(He stands in thought.)

But our trade with Germany is not unimportant. Should we not suffer too in case of war?

Premier. Not much, Your Majesty. Our loss will be but temporary and we shall quickly capture all the German trade. The
war will be over as soon as the Russians and French meet in Berlin. But there is one point of importance: we must support the allies with our navy, otherwise they will not venture into the war. We may be confident that the allies will accomplish the bulk of the task without us, for the Russians can raise nine million troops and the French five or six. Fifteen million men will be too much even for Germany, and we can count also on a rebellion of the Social Democrats in that country. They are a strong and well organized party, almost one-third of the whole people; they hate the Kaiser and will do anything to have him deposed or exiled or slain. Be assured, Germany cannot stand a war. But we must lend France and Russia our moral support. Possibly they may demand our army too.

King. We could send one hundred and fifty thousand men.

Premier. No doubt we should have to, and possibly more.

King. The time is not yet ripe, but we must prepare and make ready for war. The Triple Entente alone will be sufficient to assure victory, but we shall have, besides, the help of all the smaller powers. Belgium is sure to join us, and we may hope to gain the Dutch, the Danes, the Swedes, and the Norwegians too; if they remain neutral they shall suffer for their anti-British attitude after the war. Italy and Austria are now allied with Germany, but we can induce at least the government at Rome to stand by us, for we could ruin the long and exposed coast of their peninsula. Our navy would bombard their cities from Genoa and Venice down to Messina with absolute impunity. They are at our mercy, so they would at least remain neutral; and hence Germany will stand alone with Austria.

Premier. Yes, that is true. But let us not be overconfident. It is not likely that Holland and the northern countries will join us; they would remain neutral. However, we have created Belgium; she owes us her existence, therefore she is our friend. She will open her formidable fortresses to us and allow us free passage for an attack on Charlemagne's ancient capital, Aix-la-Chapelle.

King. That is excellent, and England will thus be able to dispose of her most dangerous rival. I myself may not see the
final triumph, but the time is surely coming and my son will inherit the fruitage of my work, the results of my diplomacy. We will run no risk.

Premier. We must put an end to Germany's naval power; we must blockade her ports. Then we will capture her trade, and check her growing wealth and commerce. The French and the Russians will break her military power, her Prussianism and her ambition.

King. Is there no way to avoid a war?

Premier. None, Your Majesty! Germany has begun to rival us in manufactures, and she threatens to surpass us in commerce. Then our supremacy will be lost. This must not be! We must cripple her pretensions and dampen her inordinate ambition. We must engage her enemies, both Slav and Gall, and between her foes to east and west her doom is sure.

King. I'll have my ministers approach both France and Russia and arrange an entente against our common enemy. But then would you have the fatherland of our old Saxons divided between the Russians and the Celts?

Premier. We need waste no sentimentality on statecraft.

King. Maybe you are right.

Premier. I'll give to Celt and Slav his share, but Germany, though in a crippled shape, we leave for future conflicts with Russia.

King. Yea, sir. I know a better way. Germany shall have her freedom. Old England stands for liberty. German culture reached its best and highest development at the time of her deepest political humiliation, but it is being ruined by militarism. When we expel her tyrants we shall restore the glorious days when she was famous as the country of poets and thinkers. Schiller and Beethoven were greater than Bismarck and Moltke. We shall liberate the Germans from the Hohenzollerns. We shall restore the older, nobler and better Germany.

Premier. Your Majesty is the greatest diplomat the world has known. You will mend the mistakes that your royal mother, otherwise so noble, has committed. But remember we must act before it is too late. The Germans are warlike. They will gladly hail a war. Their officers in the army drink to
the day when the struggle will begin; they clink their glasses and shout *Der Tag*!

**KING** (astonished). What! To the day, the Germans clink their glasses?
The day of war, of bloody, fierce decision?
The peaceful Germans?

**Premier.** Yea, the peaceful Germans,
They think it is their right to build a navy
And they do feel that we will check their growth.
The peaceful Germans are most warlike people
As soon as they believe they suffer wrong.

**King.** Oh, you are right. I fear the German danger,
But think the day of war will be a night,
A setting of the sun for either nation.

**Premier.** Your majesty! a night for Germany,
A victory for us! unfailing victory.

**King.** May be 't will be for both of us a night.
Well, let us hope the best. I trust you're right.

(Premier bows low and withdraws.)

**KING** (musing). It is an old tradition of Great Britain
To keep the nations on the continent
In equal balance. But should one be stronger
Than all the others, we must break her strength;
Therefore we will ally with France and Russia.
The strongest one is Germany. 'Gainst her
We must proceed. Our prospects promise much.
I'll have my ministers make haste straightway,
Confer with France and Russia as to terms
And have the papers drawn up with dispatch.
Would that the powers of destiny vouchsafed
The secret which the future darkly bears.
How will it be with England when I'm gone?
I fain would know the fruitage of my plans.

(Background darkens and Witch reappears.)

**Witch.** King Edward, listen to my warning voice.
War will not help you. War in fact destroys
Your own prosperity and power as much
As of your enemies. Old England thrives
In peace. Indeed her wars in recent times
Have worked her ill, and would you add one more,
A greater ill, to swell those of the past?
I see naught but bad omens in your plans,
Your sly designs and your diplomacy.
If you would keep Great Britain in the lead,
Let England's sons her battles fight with honor
In open field; do not rely on others
Nor win by gold or base diplomacy.

**King.** 'Tis time to act before it be too late,
And we must use the greatest circumspection.

**Witch.** You fear that England falls behind and that
The Germans grow in industry and power.
This may be true. I recognize the danger.
And here is the advice I have to give:
Follow the German method! Introduce
Reform all round, in school, in church, in state.
Have Englishmen progress and let them learn
The cause of Germany's advance. Thus only
Will England keep her old supremacy.

**King.** First must we overcome the German danger,
Then we will use reform! We shall ally
The world against the Kaiser. Let me see
The German Emperor.—Lo! there he rises.

*(The German Kaiser rises in the middle of the background, first alone in his uniform of the guards.)*

I grant that he is strong. He is courageous.
But how he'll wince with all these foes against him!

*(The Witch lifts her wand. On the right rise the Russians and on the left the French, with some English and Belgian troops. Among the English is King George V, and the Belgians are behind the walls of a fort.)*

**Kaiser (addressing King George V).**
O cousin, what a dreadful game is this!

Do I see you among my enemies?

**King Edward.** The Kaiser is afraid. Stand firm. Don't waver.

**King George.** I am in honor bound to draw the sword
And stand by my allies.
King Edward. • Well done, my son!

(To the Witch.)

Our friends are strong and we prefer a war!

Witch. If thou preferest war, let war prevail.

(At this declaration all draw their swords against the Kaiser.
The latter raises his sword and rises higher surrounded by German soldiers and cannon coming out of the ground.)

Kaiser. We Germans fear but God, and naught else in the world!

(At this point the first shots flash from the German cannon with loud report and the Belgian fortifications fall. The German soldiers advance to the sound of German war music toward the French and Russians, who fall back, and the background of the stage is mainly covered with advancing Germans. King Edward sinks back in his chair. Night covers the scene and German national songs are heard.)