

# 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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VOL. XXX (No. 11)

NOVEMBER, 1916

NO. 726

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## The Open Court Publishing Company

CHICAGO

Per copy, 10 cents (sixpence). Yearly, \$1.00 (in the U.P.U., 5s. 6d.).

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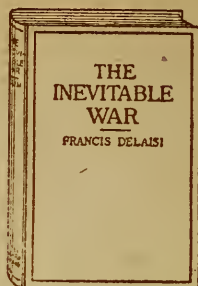
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# There Would Have Been No War

**IF** the French government had said to the English  
*You shall not have our army*  
the French government had said to the Germans  
*You shall not have our money*



Read these definitions taken at random from

## THE INEVITABLE WAR

(La Guerre qui Vient)

By FRANCIS DELAISI

**AMBASSADORS:** "Ambassadors in gold braid are today no more and no less than the agents of the banks and the great corporations."

**DEMOCRACY:** "A blind used to cover up the intrigues of the financial oligarchy which is in reality in control of the government and the people."

**DIPLOMATS:** "The tools of the financial and industrial oligarchy who work to obtain for them foreign loans or foreign purchases for their goods."

**FINANCE'S STRONGEST ALLY:** "Popular ignorance."

**FOREIGN POLICY:** "(Something) beyond the control of both public opinion and parliament; it is even beyond the control of government. In our mistrustful democracy it rests with a single man and a small coterie of financiers and men of affairs at will to unchain a war and embark this country upon a series of the most perilous adventures."

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# THE SIEGE OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

From a 15th century book in the National Library at Paris.

Frontispiece to *The Open Court*.

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## MENTALITY IN WAR-TIME.

BY WILBUR M. URBAN.

THE shock of the great world war has been followed by cries of the "bankruptcy of civilization!" Culture, morality, religion—all have broken down! Everywhere there is an immense beating of breasts; everywhere a mad fear of bogies and a still madder search for scapegoats. But little has been said about the breakdown of mentality of which precisely these frantic cries are an infallible expression.

That the mental faculties of all the belligerent peoples have suffered a severe strain there can be little doubt. It is taken for granted, and possibly it is true, that the Germans have long since lost the power of seeing or thinking straight; there are those who do not hesitate to call them "gibbering maniacs." But an unbiased study of the newspapers and magazines of England and France will, I think, suggest that the gibbering is not all in one camp. A friend of mine, of English descent and of strong pro-English sympathies, expressed himself as follows: "When I read the English newspapers and some of the journals, I want to throw the blasted little island into the ocean. When I read the German, especially the *Tages-Zeitung*, I want to go out and kill a German." The French seemed to give him more comfort, but surely he had not yet heard of the lengths to which their fight against German *Kultur* has gone, certainly not of Camille Saint-Saen's diatribe against Wagner in the *Echo de Paris*: "After the massacre of women and children, after the bombardment of hospitals, etc., etc., how can there be found a single Frenchman to demand the music of this fakir?"

The impairment of the belligerent mind was to be expected and should be treated with sympathy and understanding. If, as Mr.

Arthur Bullard maintains, "you can count on the fingers of one hand the men of note in any of the belligerent countries who . . . have kept their heads level in the crisis, who have preserved any objective sense of justice," who will find it in his heart to blame? Leaving out of account the exigency of the manufacture of war sentiment, it is inhuman to expect a man to see straight when his eyes are suffused with tears, or to think straight when all his faculties are strained to the utmost upon the abnormal and demoralizing task of war. "To fight and to discuss ethics at the same time seems indeed impossible." But with the breakdown of American intelligence it is different. Here it is not so easy to have patience. Mr. John R. Mott tells of an English bishop who regretted our lack of restraint, saying that "he had hoped the Americans would keep their moral powder dry,"—that their influence might count in the settlement at the end of the war. Alas for our moral powder—of which we have always thought ourselves to have an inexhaustible supply! But of that perhaps the least said the better.

To one who has simply watched this *débâcle* of intelligence the whole thing has not been without its comic side. For those who seek some antidote to the ever-gnawing pain which the hates and misunderstandings of great peoples and cultures have brought us, it is a welcome relief. Perhaps a light and frivolous manner is the only treatment the subject deserves—or will bear. I have in my possession, for instance, a fine collection of logical "howlers," culled from the war literature, invaluable in a class in logic, but scarcely suited to wider publicity; they would be recognized in some instances, and these the best, as coming from distinguished pens! They comprise all the known fallacies, material and formal—"and then some"! The fallacies of ambiguity that have gathered about the words *Kultur* and militarism! The playing fast and loose with analogies—between burglars and national armies, between civil and international law, between a United States of America and a United States of Europe; between, I had almost said, our own back yards and the Universe! The fallacies of observation and inference! The irrelevancies! Arguments, even by distinguished men, to the effect that the Germans have never produced anything of importance in art and science, by the simple expedient of merely enumerating the achievements of the allied nations; and the cry of the man in the street, "If this is German science, I want none of it." The idols of the forum and of the cave! As when noted statemen tell us we must go back to individualism in our constitutions because the Germans violated the neutrality of Belgium, or



when noted alienists determine the precise form of the Kaiser's insanity—*without even seeing him!*

I have said that it is hard to have patience with the breakdown of our own intelligence which the present strain has entailed. Yet this is scarcely fair. We, no less than the belligerents, have had a serious shock, and as is usual in such cases the shock has left characteristic "psychoses." "A man is inclined to fallacy on a special subject," says a recent writer on logic, "when he lies open to some cause impairing on that subject his interest and noetic power. He is inclined to fallacy generally when a wider cause of impairment extends over his whole character." "The student of abnormal thinking ought," he holds, "to look to such causes for the source of fallacy."

Why is my friend Jones so invariably fallacious when he talks about the war? Though otherwise a man of good understanding, when he gets started on this topic all the fallacies, verbal, inferential, and demonstrational, appear with fatal impartiality. Can any one doubt that such a wider source of impairment is here in question? That our brains have been unsettled and our tongues loosed? Amnesias, lesions, mob suggestion—are not all the signs of a great moral shock in evidence? Is it surprising that history is forgotten; that the touch with reality is lost, and the *non sequitur* triumphs? For my own part I verily believe, paradoxical as it may seem, that the distinctively *moral* shock of the war has been greater for America than for any of the belligerent nations. It is hard to take the protestations of the others seriously; in their hearts they knew too much.

"I can never get over the invasion of Belgium! I can never get over that." To this my friend Jones inevitably returns, and no matter what the argument may be his judgment is pre-determined by the emotion of that initial shock. Whether in the light of history and a knowledge of human nature and the European situation, we *should* have been so shocked, is a question that might well be raised. One might well ask with Mr. Gibbons in his *New Map of Europe*, "Where does history give us an example of a nation holding to a treaty when it was against her interest to do so?" But this is here beside the mark. The fact remains that we have been shocked—and deeply. "We had thought" that treaties had become inviolate, that international law was finally established, that war was an impossibility, an absurdity, that we were on the road to continuous and universal progress. We had thought, we had hoped,—how often I have heard and read this plaintive refrain! An almost

incredible innocency of mind, a *naïveté* almost unknown to the sophisticated European, was necessary to that faith. But that does not alter the fact that my friend Jones had it.

"With all their progress as a race and nation," says a recent writer, "Americans are singularly blind to the realities of national existence." We have been raised on the "optimistic fallacy," and in international matters we have given it full play. Can any one be surprised that the shock of disillusionment was overwhelming, that in our present state of mind we have had little use for either history or logic? But this is not all. Add to this lovable if dangerous ignorance still another invincible quality of my friend Jones, and the psychological picture is complete. If, as Mr. Brooks Adams has pointed out, in domestic matters the average American is unable to think of social and national forces except in terms of persons, it is even more true in all that concerns international affairs where the demands of knowledge and imagination are still more exacting. He thinks of national forces in terms of men, of states as though they were individuals who act on single and sentimental motives; and as the cry "guilt is personal" is often the limit of his wisdom in his national distress, so in his greatest of all distresses, to find a scapegoat seems his highest duty as it is his deepest need. The "will to believe" has slain its thousands, but the disillusionment of that will its tens of thousands!

## II.

It is hard to resist the temptation to exploit my collection of logical howlers. After all, is not a light and frivolous manner really all the subject deserves? But that, I fear, would appear smart and pedantic, and—now that logic and reason have made the Germans mad, and we are even called upon to learn of the emotional and intuitional Slav—scarcely convincing. Besides, the experiences of Mr. Bernard Shaw are not precisely encouraging. Let us rather go straight to the heart of the matter, to the "psychoses" that beget the fallacies.

For one thing, as a result of the shock there have been *amnesias* of a profound and far-reaching character. The horrible Congo, the Boer War, bloody St. Vladimir's Day in St. Petersburg—all are forgotten. New national characters are born over night. There is a new France, her temperamental and moral qualities changed by the miracle of war. We suddenly find ourselves more akin to the contradictory and fatalistic Slav than the self-consistent, thinking German. The leopard changes his spots and the "bear that walks

like a man" has become a sweet and appealing child of nature simply masking in the head and pelt of a bear. What a miracle has been wrought in the decade since from being "an immoral race of blackguards with no sense of national honor," the Servian regicides have become "that brave and noble little race, spirited defenders of the liberties of Europe!" These two sentiments are quoted from the same newspaper. "It is indeed," as a distinguished historian remarked, "as though history had never been written!"

It was at the very beginning of the war that my friend thus expressed his amazement, as we heard on every side that the case against Germany was closed. Familiar with the workings of the individual and social mind, to him this finality was ominous of worse things to come. The signs of mob passion, of the profound forgetfulness that goes with it, and the inevitable loss of the sense of evidence, so dependent upon the ability to *remember* all relevant circumstances—all this was not to be disguised, even by the obvious if pleasing fallacy of the High Court of Humanity. For already in this first test of the quality of our judgment was revealed as in a flash the whole extent and meaning of the shock—the forgetfulness of all that wars and diplomacies have taught us in the past, the false assumption that the evidence is really all in, and above all the sullen indifference to the question whether it is or not!

But I pass over this. The case against Germany is closed. Who am I that I should seek to reopen it? The American people, a glorified jury of "good men and true," have had the white book, the yellow, the blue, the orange, the green, or whatever the colors may be, put before them; the evidence is all in; the jury has been charged by a distinguished lawyer; its judgment is passed; and the case is closed—with a finality as complete as ever marked any rough and ready justice of the Western plains, from which apparently we still get many of our ideas of judicial procedure. And yet the situation is not without its elements of humor. The apotheosis of the good men and true—the calm assumption that they are a match for the diplomatic cunning with which these documents were written and *selected*; and still more the fact that a distinguished lawyer should have taken them seriously at all!—surely these things argue a mentality as curious as it is amazing. But there is something more amazing still. For even granting the exactness and completeness of these documents—which no sophisticated European would think of doing at all, are not the probabilities of reaching a true judgment still almost *nil*? Twenty ambassadors and five ministers are at work at the same time to reach an understanding.

Twenty-five different voices crossing each other! What was the chance of a reasonable issue of the confusion then? What—and it is this that especially concerns us now—is the chance of *our* forming a true picture of the motives and the forces then at work? Recall what you know of permutations and combinations and reckoning of probabilities, and decide for yourself!

But I pass over this. It was indeed but ominous of worse things to come. I pass over the whole curious chapter of atrocity stories, our acceptance of which, had not the historian and the psychologist been able to predict it with almost mathematical certainty, would have staggered belief. I pass over our avidity for the most impossible tales—the wholly motiveless character of which would have been obvious to us in our saner moments—our curious insensibility to contradictory evidence when it appears. I pass over the logic—and the candor!—of the editorial in a leading New York daily which, while grudgingly admitting that we might have to revise our opinions on some of these points, still insisted that we “*need no longer consider the question of evidence after the destruction of the Lusitania!*”

The impairment of our mentality has gone deeper than all this. Beneath the loss of the sense for evidence in the ordinary meaning of the term, is a more profound disturbance of our feeling for credibility. It is not merely as though history had never been written; it is as though all our knowledge of races and peoples, even of human nature itself, had been thrown into the discard. Our credulity has grown with what it feeds upon. We no longer see in lights and shades but only in blacks and whites. As of Germany's enemies we are ready to believe an impossible goodness, so of Germany herself nothing has become too incredibly diabolical for us to accept. Of this deeper abnormality—this more fundamental loss of the touch with reality there have been instances innumerable, but I concentrate upon one splendid frightful example, an article in the *Saturday Evening Post* for July 3, 1915, entitled “The Pentecost of Calamity,” by Mr. Owen Wister.

### III.

I have chosen this illustration, not because it is exceptional (everybody is doing it—there are fashions in thought as well as in clothing); but because both the emotion of the shock and its disastrous effects are displayed with something that approaches genius. I doubt whether there is a single fallacy of observation or



inference that may not be justly charged against it, but here again I have no desire to be either pedantic or hypercritical. I am interested in the psychoses that beget the fallacies.

First, then Mr. Wister gives us a picture of Germany in peace—a trifle roseate it is true to those of us who have spent much time in the land of music and philosophy, but then Mr. Wister must have his literary effects, and the picture is in the main true. "Nothing," he concludes, "can efface this memory, nothing can efface the whole impression of Germany. In retrospect this picture rises clear—the fair aspect and order of the country and the cities, the well-being of the people, their contented faces, their grave adequacy, their kindliness; and crowning all material prosperity, the feeling of beauty, . . . . . Such was the splendor of this empire as it unrolled before me through May and June, 1914, that by contrast the state of its two neighbors, France and England, seemed distressing and unenviable. . . . In May, June, and July, 1914, my choice would have been" (could he have been born again) "not France, not England, not America, but Germany!"

But almost over night Mr. Wister's beloved Germany is absolutely changed. A children's festival in Frankfort (I should like to reproduce his charming description, for it epitomizes what seemed to him the whole splendid *Kultur* of the people) gave rise to this exalted eulogy. But now another festival is to be recorded. A German torpedo sank the *Lusitania* and the cities of the Rhine celebrated this also for their children! (This has been authoritatively denied, but let Mr. Wister have it for his argument.) "The world is in agony," cries Mr. Wister, "over this moral catastrophe." Mr. Wister is in agony too, and in the throes of that agony he paints a picture of Germany as black as the first was white. "Is it the same Germany," he exclaims, "that gave these two holidays to her schoolchildren? The opera in Frankfort and this orgy of barbaric blood-lust, guttural with the deep basses of the fathers and shrill with the trebles of their young? Do the holidays proceed from the same *Kultur*, the same Fatherland? They do, and nothing in the whole story of mankind is more strange than the case of Germany."

There you have it—the readiness for the impossible to which the moral agony of the shock lays the mind open! "It would be incredible," he admits, "if it had not culminated before our eyes." It *is* incredible. To this Mr. Wister and all of us should have held fast—if we wish to save our reason. Not the *two events* perhaps, assuming that the latter took place (history is full of such contradictions—even our own), but Mr. Wister's and others' *explanation*



of them. Such a change as is here assumed is not only strange. Its possibility would make impossible all history, all knowledge, all prediction about human nature. The two Germanys are absolute contradictories. Either the picture of May and June—of the “contented faces” and “grave adequacy,” Germany as a supreme expression of reason and ordered life—was false, or the present picture of barbaric blood-lust and gibbering madness is a caricature. Either Mr. Wister’s eyes, and those of most of us, were blind then, or they are blind now. But if they were blind then, which by his own admission they must have been through all the long years of peace, who shall guarantee that they are any clearer now mid the shock of war?

You have your choice then; you cannot have it both ways and keep your reason. Mr. Wister tries to and comes perilously near losing his. For after all there must be some explanation of this incredible change. Mr. Wister has an explanation—one *far more incredible than the fact to be explained*. I had thought it limited to my friend Jones, “the man in the street,” but no one seems to be immune. It is precisely in this explanation, I hold, that the full extent of the impairment of our mentality is to be seen. Of this “gibbering madness” then—so long incubating, under a fair and rational exterior, he finds the explanation in a people schooled for generations in a long course of diabolical philosophy. He gives us a composite picture, what he himself calls “an embodiment, a composite statement of Prussianism, compiled sentence by sentence from the utterances of Prussians, the Kaiser and his generals, professors, editors, and Nietzsche, part of it said in cold blood, years before the war, and all of it a declaration of faith now being ratified by action.”

I confess that it is difficult for me to take this Nietzsche and other nonsense seriously. After some years of residence in Germany and many years of study of German thought, it all seems to me a splendid though pitiful hoax, over which the historian of the future will have many a laugh. Be that as it may, what concerns us here is Mr. Wister’s “composite statement” and the way it is made up. Without doubt he has made the Germans talk gibbering madness. But how has he done it? His statement is nothing but a mosaic of phrases and short sentences torn from their contexts and cemented together with asterisks! Has Mr. Wister never studied composite pictures of socialism, or any other *ism*, even of Christianity, made up in this way by men of equally fine sense for scientific method? Has he not heard them all made to talk gibbering

nonsense? I have. Does he not know that at this very time Nietzsche himself, by this very method, has been made to praise both peace and war? Now I contend that under ordinary circumstances Mr. Wister would be the first to see the fallacy of this method. I think also he would see the incredibility of this explanation of the incredible. My friend Jones is not a man of "ideas." Knowing nothing about them, before the war he was as ready to sneer at them as powerless as he is now to ascribe to them the miraculous. But Mr. Wister is. Surely he knows what they can and what they can not do.

But I will not press this point. It is enough to call attention to the fact that the Prussians themselves are playing this same game and finding it just as easy. To take one of many instances. Chamberlain in his war essays, entitled *Wer hat den Krieg verschuldet?* and *Grundstimmungen in Frankreich und England*, has built up composite photographs that for madness (more methodical than gibbering perhaps) also leave little to be desired. I wish there were space to reproduce them here, but I can merely suggest. What, for instance, must be the German estimate of the British frame of mind, and the ultimate British motive of the war, when he finds, in the leading English engineering journal, *The Engineer*, September 25, 1914, this enlightening proposal: "Now there is one way by which the end in view [of securing the trade hitherto carried on by Germany] can be attained. It is a ruthless way, but eminently simple. It is the deliberate and organized destruction of the plant and equipment of German industry in general, and in that organized destruction the great iron and steel works of the Fatherland should share. The occupation of German territory by the allied troops should be accompanied by the destruction of all the large industries within the sphere of occupation. It is held that if it were known and felt here and in France that such a scheme of organized destruction was to be carried out on German territory, capital would be at once stimulated in steady streams in aid of home industries, which would profit enormously by the course taken." Surely the German has a right to nightmares and bogies of his own! Or what do you suppose is the picture he forms of France when he learns from Chamberlain and others that in the French schools *la revanche* is constantly taught, and that there, no less than in the books of military writers, the revenge means the demand for the *Rhine frontier*? Or what his feelings when he is maddened by quotations from books that bear such titles as these: *La Fin de la Prusse et le démembrement de l'Allemagne*, or *Le*

*Partage de l'Allemagne; l'échéance de demain*, written by a French officer as late as 1912?

I do not believe in German bogies any more than in English. I am merely suggesting how fatally easy the whole thing is. But to return to our point. *It is to this silly and sordid business that we have sunk.* It is well enough for the belligerents themselves who have no longer perhaps any reason to save! But for us! For there is a way of keeping our reason, if we really care to. I can imagine a golden formula, a sort of sovereign specific against vapors and chimeras in war time. It should include meditation on bogies and how they are made—with special reference to antichrists, and for Americans a close study of contemporary characterizations of Cromwell and Lincoln. These exercises in memory should be followed by *daily repetition* of certain question-begging epithets—such as Kipling's description of the trenches as the "frontier of civilization" and Bergson's "scientific barbarism," *until their full meaning is realized.* And finally, daily exercises in common sense and credibility. This should include a relentless subjection of oneself to the reading and re-reading of Mr. Wister's paper, of Chesterton's paradoxes on German barbarism and Chamberlain's mouthings on England's immorality and degeneracy. This is, I admit, heroic treatment, but I have found the cure useful in my own case and believe that it may be found helpful to others. Anything to free us from this nightmare of fantastic ideology!

#### IV.

With this I come to what seems to me the most disastrous phase into which our precarious mentality has fallen—the rage against German *Kultur* and philosophy. In the bitter disillusionment the pricking of our optimistic fallacy has brought with it, we are not only raging against those who, we think, have taken our illusions from us; we are also wreaking our fury upon abstract ideas in a way that would be laughable if it were also not really tragic. The greybeard of to-day may rush into print with the cry that he "will never be able again to look a German in the face without a shudder," but it is quite certain that his grandson, and in all probability his son, will smile as I now smile over a book written by my soldier uncle in which all the "rebels" are brutes and barbarians. The man in the street may say, "If this is German science, I want none of it," and even first-rate men in the heat of the moment may set themselves to proving that there is no genuine art or science

except among the allies, but all this merely adds to the gaiety of nations—which will be sadly needed after the war is over.

But with those larger ideas and ideals that color our life and society the case is different. Here a sullen reaction against a caricature of the magnificent conceptions which bear the mark, "made in Germany" may for a long time estrange us from ideas that we sadly need; the mere accident of their temporal association with the German name may blind us to values that are eternal. Science and thought are not national, but the "fallacy of accident" to which our emotion makes us prone may easily tempt us into thinking that they are.

It is disquieting to realize that in this rage against ideas, and the orgy of fallacious thinking that has followed, the scholar has, alas, very nearly kept pace with the "man in the street." Fortunately English scholarship is beginning to cry *peccavi*. The distinguished classical scholar, Professor Gardiner, writes in the *Hibbert Journal*: "When I hear some of my colleagues whose books are full of references to German writers and who have been inclined in past days to pay perhaps too much attention to the latest German view, now belittle German methods of discovery, I think they are not speaking worthily and are allowing a natural indignation at recent events to warp their judgment." And again, in the same issue the Rev. A. W. F. Blunt: "To speak seriously as if German culture was entirely a fiction of German vanity is both silly and ungrateful and I think many must have writhed inwardly with feelings not unlike shame as they have read of late letters in the public press, with distinguished names at their foot, in which the tendency has been to cast doubt on the genuineness of Germany's titles to admiration from the world of intellect." Sane and noble words these! Would that we Americans might also cry *peccavi*! Would that we, who have not the Englishman's excuse, had never sinned!

It is no part of my intention to defend the German culture, although I owe it much. Others can do that better than I. I am concerned wholly with our present *attitude* and the mentality it displays. For this belittling of German thought and culture, shameful and ungrateful as it is to many of us, has a more serious aspect. In the "dark ages" men argued that if a man were a materialist in philosophy he must necessarily lead a bad life; if he did not pay his debts, his mathematical reasoning must be faulty. How great the improvement of the understanding has been! Now we merely argue, that if a man believes in the "great state" of Hegel, the



"categorical imperative" of Kant, or in Nietzsche's "overman," he must have an irresistible impulse toward gratuitous murder; if he happens to believe his own nation in the right, his scientific reasoning is not to be trusted. Of the famous or infamous manifesto of the German professors and scholars much has been written, but the best of all was when an American colleague (himself a logician!) bemoaned the fact that after this self-stultification and breakdown of intellect, we must, alas, lose all confidence in their scientific and philosophical work! "Surely such foolishness," as an editorial in the *Hartford Courant* mildly says, "will not long survive the excitements of the war, even in perfervid minds."

"I regard it," says Mr. Blunt in the article already referred to, "as a public danger that a man like Lord Haldane is popularly suspected because he is known to be an expert in German philosophy." Is it not still more a public danger that this same German philosophy, and the ideas of society and the state so long associated with it, should, because of certain supposed practical consequences, be not only suspected, but condemned root and branch? Is not this, *even if the connection were established*, as the German himself would laughingly say, throwing out the baby with the bath? The grotesque and childish ideology which makes German philosophy the cause of the war is in itself no less a public danger because it is also a delicious hoax the like of which the world may have to wait centuries again to see. Our confusion of the real causes of things is in itself a public misfortune for it has for the present at least undone the work of years of clear thinking. But it is still more a public danger because of the contempt for ideas and true idealism that the reaction will surely entail.

In this recrudescence of ideology the philosopher has, alas, again kept pace with the man in the street. It is to be hoped that he will be the first to suffer when the reaction comes. First it was Nietzsche's "overman," then the Hegelian "great state," and finally the "categorical imperative" of poor inoffensive Kant. The mad philosopher, the man of the clouds and the pedantic little man of Königsberg—all of whom prior to the war it was good form to profess not to understand—are now seen to have forged the arms of German militarism. Those who were loudest in deriding theory then are the first to believe the incredible of it now. To one who knows, these three men differ so profoundly in their moral and political outlook that the effort to make each one of them responsible for the war should in itself constitute a *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole proceeding, and clear evidence that the "will to believe"



has here celebrated another triumph. But ignoring this point, and the professional shame it entails, let me proceed at once to what for me constitutes the tragic aspect of the whole situation. It is the unnecessary and wholly unpardonable pollution of international culture, the dragging into the dirt of free, pure, and abstract thought, the prostitution of it to base ends. More than this, there is the inevitable blinding of our own eyes—perhaps for decades to come, to the eternal values of this philosophy itself.

For in this Nietzsche and other nonsense there is at least one important half-truth. All these men, however much they may differ in moral and political outlook, agree in teaching one all-important thing, the sacrifice of the individual to the over-individual good. It may be an over-individual law, an over-individual will or state, or the overman—the principle is the same. Who that knows anything about the spiritual developments of the past century is unaware that this is Germany's great contribution to international culture? Who does not know that, notwithstanding its excesses and defects, it is the inspiration of much of our social advance? And finally who is there that—eschewing all false ideology, yet knowing what ideals really can do—does not understand that while the forces that have made our modern industrial world, and modern Germany itself, lie far below the level of these ideas, yet it is these same ideas that have served chiefly to guide the blindness of the will?

It is, I repeat, not my intention to defend the German culture and philosophy, though defense of its essential genius and central principle would not be difficult. It is even possible that the success of this principle in its struggle with individualism is infinitely more important than any of the immediate issues of the war either political or moral. But with this I am not concerned. In the end this philosophy will take care of itself; the struggle for national existence and social righteousness are the final tests to which any such philosophy must submit. Besides it is a question whether upon these ultimate problems argument is not almost if not altogether futile—whether for instance when the German and the American speak of freedom they do not use an entirely different spiritual idiom. With our *attitude* toward this philosophy I *am* concerned, and deeply—with the impairment of mentality it displays and the intellectual and moral dangers it involves.

How unreasoning that attitude has become is clear to any one who reads. It is because of his acquaintance with and admiration for this philosophy that Lord Haldane is popularly suspected! Only two years ago his brilliant presentation of this philosophy

before the American Bar Association was followed by columns of newspaper eulogy. Now reaction is heard on every side. Professor Kuno Francke says somewhat pathetically that "the German's conception of the state and his devotion to it is something that the American can scarcely understand." And forthwith editorial writers shriek: "We don't want to understand!" If this seems to you beneath notice, what shall be said of that speech of one of our leading statesmen before the New York constitutional convention wherein he actually argues, that after the invasion of Belgium and the destruction of the Lusitania, there is nothing for it but to abandon the entire philosophy of the state which produced them and go back unreservedly to the individualistic principles of our fathers? For irrelevancy, for adroit *argumentum ad populum* and for sheer Bourbon disdain of the popular intelligence, surely this has rarely been equalled. It has indeed been equalled only by those who, because the Germans have a disconcerting way of using both science and logic, would have us despair of logic and science themselves.

## V.

It is to such lengths that the rage over our bitter disillusionment has brought us. I gave so much space to Mr. Wister's article precisely because you will there find—as every one will, I am sure, admit—the mentality of my friend Jones reproduced with a perfection that amounts almost to genius; certainly the *Saturday Evening Post* was an ideal place for its publication. But it will ever remain a mystery to me how Mr. Wister did it. With such an unbounded scorn of Jones's mentality as he professes in his *Quack Novels and Democracy*, with such a fine sense for the "optimistic fallacy" in our literature and politics, it is curious that he should have been wholly blind to the role it has played in our attitude toward the war, that instead of fanning the rage of a disillusioned optimism he should not have been the first to warn us against its dangers.

That we have always had this tendency to optimism and sentimentality in our own political life, Mr. Wister has admirably shown. How by the continual mouthing of the "blessed words" liberty and equality, by nourishing our optimism on phrases, we have acquired an instinct to look away from any reality that falls short of squaring with them. From all such unpleasant facts political and social, "we turned our eyes so quickly and so hard that our national sincerity ended by acquiring a permanent squint." Is it possible that he is wholly unaware of our "optimistic fallacy" in international

matters as well, and of the squint our national eyes have here acquired?

"We had thought we had attained to knowledge of and belief in an inviolable public right between nations, and an honorable warfare if warfare there must be," cries Mr. Wister. We had thought, we had thought—and now you have taken our belief from us! The cries of this disappointed sentiment one hears everywhere. They recall the vicar in *Trilby*, when he shrieked at little Billee: "You're a *thief* Sir! a *thief*! You're trying to *rob me of my Saviour*!" We had thought! We had thought! Yes, but what right had we to think so? When the most sacred rights of the individual in national and civic life are violated in the interests of business and property, what right had we to expect that the more intangible and uncertain customs misnamed international law, would hold against the strain of nations and cultures fighting, as they maintain, for their very existence? When our own civic and national existence is shot through with "official lies," what right had we to think there would be no "scrap of paper" in international life? Those large abstract ideas of universal peace, of the inviolability of treaties, of international arbitration and the international commonwealth, the emptiness of which has come home to Mr. Wister with such a shock—has not our sentimental belief in and attachment to them been just because we have kept, and (unlike the European nations) *could* "keep them," as Lowell says, "in the abstract?"

One does not need to justify the wrongs of Belgium and the Lusitania—which I would be the last to do—to see how cheap and easy much of our moral pathos really is, to see that our national sincerity has indeed acquired a permanent squint. I have been studying ethics all my life and it has been my business to teach it, but I am not afraid candidly to confess my growing disenchantment with its pathos. If not precisely a convert to the socialist's distaste and contempt for what he calls moral ideology, I have seen enough to know that it has gone a long way toward saving his own mentality in the present crisis. For of the few that have kept their heads the socialists are easily first. As in the participation in the war itself it was their necessity and not their will that consented, so in their judgments they have, on the whole, retained a remarkable balance. The openly confessed wish of the Russian socialists that Germany should be victorious in the East and defeated in the West, will remain one of the monumental things of this war. If we, as a people, could have attained to even this much clarity of

vision, if we could, as the good bishop hoped, have kept our moral powder dry; if we had not used up most of it at the beginning of the war, and soaked the remainder with our tears, what might we not have done, if not in the political, at least in the cultural reconstruction that must constitute the bitterest and the hardest task of the entire war! But for that it is now, I fear, too late.

*"Comprendre et ne pas s'indigner!"* This has been said to be the last word of philosophy. I believe none of it; and had I to choose, I should much prefer, when in the presence of crime to give my indignation rein and not to understand." These words are the fitting prelude of that amazing article published by Prof. Henri Bergson under the title, "Life and Matter at War." Of one who has consistently disdained intellect and analysis and has trusted to the revelations of intuition guided by emotion, this choice of indignation rather than understanding was perhaps to be expected. Nay more, it is to be pardoned in a Frenchman, as similar lapses of reason are to be pardoned in the German savant. But in us such things are not to be pardoned. Our task is decidedly to comprehend and not to excite ourselves either with vague moral enthusiasms or with large unanalyzed ideas. Good for stimulus and action—"for fighting," as Lord Roberts said, "the enemy with one's mouth"—they are fatal to knowledge and reflection. It is ours, I say, to comprehend and not to say, "we do not want to understand." Above all we must protest against all the cheap ideologists and idea mongers who have been raging and imagining a vain thing. Against those who frighten us with tales of science become diabolical, of logic and reason having made the Germans mad, and who, neglecting the plain facts of political and economic rivalry, bring the great world war under some cosmic misnomer "Life and Matter at War." This way lies madness! No more of that!