

is human, to traverse the realm of ideas in companionship with the noblest of all nations and ages—this has at all times been the German characteristic." Germany should be the leader and ruler of the world, and such she would now be, were it not that, while she has been indulging in dreams of the spirit, England has slyly and treacherously been laying her hand on the outlying regions of the globe and degrading mankind with her materialistic opportunism. But real power cannot always be concealed, and "a thing that is wholly a sham [that is, England, "the great robber-state"] cannot in this universe of ours endure for ever." War is the last revealer of power, and "God will see to it that war always recurs as a drastic medicine for the human race"; it is something more than a purge; it is, in the words of another militarist, the *schaffendes Weltprinzip*. With England, then, the war will come, the sooner the better; and might, which is also right, will prevail.

Such, it appears, are the ideas that dominate the whole school of what are called the Prussian historians, with Treitschke as their coryphæus. Their works have never really reached English readers, but since the outbreak of war their spirit has become sufficiently known across the Channel by the writings of a retired general of cavalry, Friedrich von Bernhardi,* who is an avowed disciple of Treitschke's. The deep-rooted Nietzscheism of this flamboyant militarist will be clear enough from a few sentences taken at random out of the pages of "Germany and the Next War":

War is a biological necessity of the first importance. . . . "War is the father of all things." The sages of antiquity long before Darwin recognized this.

"To supplant or to be supplanted is the essence of life," says Goethe, and the strong life gains the upper hand. The law of the stronger holds good everywhere.

It is a persistent struggle for possessions, power, and sovereignty, which primarily governs the relations of one nation to another, and right is respected so far only as it is compatible with advantage.

"Justice," says Goethe aptly, "is a quality and a phantom of the Germans."

The end-all and be-all of a state is power. Might is at once the supreme right, and the dispute as to what is right is decided by the arbitrament of war. War gives a biologically just decision, since its decisions rest on the very nature of things.

Such statements as these would no doubt have passed unnoticed in England as being merely ideas and "academic," as would even the repetition of Treitschke's diatribes against British cant and senility, were it not that Bernhardi's most direct and audacious forecast of a war between Germany and Austria on the one side with France, Russia, and England on the other was so suddenly fulfilled and his theory of its strategy so largely carried out. The most impervious British mind could no longer overlook the fact that

Germany was, with a vengeance, seeking for herself "a place in the sun," and attempting, as Frederick the Great once said, to *corriger la figure de la Prusse*. And events are proving that the military prophets were right in predicting that, whatever might be the immediate cause of hostilities and whoever might be the allied contestants, the struggle in the end was to be between Germany and Great Britain for empire, for *Weltmacht* oder *Niedergang*. At least that is overwhelmingly the passion of Germany at the present moment. Every report from that land shows that her desire to make an end forever of the French longing for *revanche* and her need to set a limit to Slavic expansion are almost swallowed up in a fierce hatred of England as the inaccessible obstacle to her lust of empire. Nor should old causes of detestation be forgotten. Long ago I asked a very intelligent German why he so hated England. His answer implied more than he said in words: "Do you remember Thackeray's picture of court life at Pumpernickel in 'Vanity Fair'?" England must be not only crushed but humiliated.

III.

And what of England herself? In a word, the matter lies thus: while in Germany the lust of empire has produced a tremendously efficient instrument of war, her rival, without any such avowed purpose and with no such efficiency, has somehow created an empire. I would not say that the vision of world-power has not floated before the minds of individual Englishmen, and at times stirred vaguely in the popular consciousness. Even in the early eighteenth century a minor poet, Thomas Tickell, could be lifted to eloquence by such a theme:

Accept, great Anne, the tears their memory draws

Who nobly perish'd in their sov'reign's cause:
For thou in pity bid'st the war give o'er,
Mourn'st thy slain heroes, nor wilt venture more.

Vast price of blood on each victorious day!
(But Europe's freedom doth that price repay.)
Lamented triumphs! when one breath must tell

That Marlborough conquer'd, and that Dor-
mer fell.

Great Queen! whose name strikes haughty
monarchs pale,

On whose just sceptre hangs Europa's scale;
Whose arm like mercy wounds, decides like fate,

On whose decree the nations anxious wait;
From Albion's cliffs thy wide extended hand
Shall o'er the main to far Peru command,
So vast a tract whose wide domain shall run,
Its circling skies shall see no setting sun.

That note is not altogether uncommon in English literature; but it is not prevalent, and above all it was never developed into a practical and widely accepted philosophy. As a matter of fact, the history of the British Empire shows little purpose or guiding policy, but rather a blind following of chance and opportunity. Her great increase of power has come oftener from opposition to the ambition of some other nation than from a conscious ambition of her own. So it was when the navies of Spain were checked, and

again when Marlborough stood against Louis XIV, and when Wellington put a stop to the Napoleonic dreams—and so it may happen to-day with Prussia, and to-morrow, who knows? with the sluggish Bear of Europe. She lost half a continent when her Government tried to enforce a theory of empire on her subjects of America; whereas her vast gains in India were rather thrust upon her by the greed of merchants at home and the independent vigor of distant agents beyond her control, just as the conquest of Africa was brought to her half-willing hands by the audacity of two or three irresponsible megalomaniacs.

There has never been anything in the English intelligence corresponding to Nietzscheism or Treitschkeism, and there is nothing like it to-day save perhaps in a few isolated minds, and that for reasons at once a credit and a discredit to the people. For the discredit we shall not hesitate to say, as Matthew Arnold and Bagehot and other good patriots have said very emphatically, that the English as a people are just, not intelligent, if by intelligence one means an interest in ideas for themselves or a pleasure in the operations of the mind apart from immediate utility. From the days of the Reformation to the present the only philosophy that has gained any genuine ascendance in that land is the doctrine of Bacon and Locke and Bentham, which has worked itself out logically in the creation of "comfort" and in the increase of "ingenious trade." Such writers as Nietzsche and Treitschke could not be national powers for this reason, if for no other, that, after all, those men were absorbed in ideas and in subjecting the crude material of life to a rigid theory.

That ever-growing indolence of the brain in England is discreditably; and, to mention a single symptom of the case, if the war can succeed in manifesting to London the hollowness of the mountebanks and decadents and hysterical women who are now supposed there to be making literature, it will have done one good thing at least. But there is a creditable side to British opportunism also—a glory, if you will, in the operation of instinctive, unreasoned character, and in the ready response to the call of duty. Jameson, a physician in far-away Africa, stung by the spirit of adventure and bringing about great international changes by his daring, is characteristic of his people. But more characteristic is the activity of a clerk like Clive, who, under the spur of necessity and without training, takes up the burden of government and creates an Empire.

The German mind, and to a certain extent the world at large, has never been able to understand this opportunism, which is mothered by lack of intelligence and purpose and fathered by a mute or magnificent response to the claim of the thing to be done now and here. So it is that to a philosophical historian such as Treitschke the whole record of the British Empire is a tale of treachery and underhand deal-

*Germany and the Next War. Translated by Allen D. Cox. New York: Charles A. Eron.

How Germany Makes War. (A condensation of On War of To-day.) New York: George H. Doran Company. \$1.25 net.

ing, and the basis of British character is sham and lying pretence. This, too, is the source of that imputation of cant which is so often retorted upon British pride. And—such is the tangle of good and evil in human nature—the imputation is in part true. When the smug Briton arrogates to himself the virtues of his greater compatriots, when he attempts to give a reason for what his race has irrationally accomplished, when he wraps himself up in a vulgar self-complacency, he does sometimes fall a victim to an unpleasant simulacrum of righteousness. Cant is the sham of morality that confronts the sham intellectualism of Germany—for wital we must not forget that an intellectualism which honors purpose and intellect to the dishonor of the traditional sense of what is right, and which starts from a fundamental disregard of truth, is itself also a sham. But cant is only the shadow and not the substance of British character. The real contrast to Nietzscheism is patriotism. Now, it need scarcely be said that patriotism is not exclusively British, nor is all the so-called patriotism of that land admirable. Was it not Dr. Johnson who denounced the word as the last resort of scoundrels? But patriotism as a kind of philosophy opposed to Treitschkeism, if the paradox may be allowed, the profound emotion that accompanies the lack of reflection and the sense of duty, is peculiarly English.

If any one cares to see what is meant by this comparison of Treitschkeism and patriotism, let him read the little book which contains the lectures of the late Professor Cramb.* It is an eloquent piece of writing, informed with deep feeling, a trumpet call, one might almost say without metaphor, to rouse his countrymen to an understanding of what has been going on across the Channel and to the necessity of preparing for the war which has, since these lectures, actually broken out. Let me quote the words that must be engraved now in the heart of many of his hearers. After telling the story of the perishing of Capt. Scott and his comrades in the Antarctic snows, he continues:

And then pass to the last stage in the drama—to that other death. There in the tent beside his dead the leader sits, still alive; there he sits, unvanquished and unappalled, his head propped against the tent-pole to ease his fatigue in the last slow dreadful vigil, whilst down over his magnificently English features a night deeper than the Polar night descends. And what are the thoughts which then flicker in front of him? We know them; we have them written in his own hand in that priceless record—priceless because authentic. "The greatness of England—my nation!" It is the greatness of England which uplifts him as death steals over his features like a marble mask.

Now I suggest to you that one explanation of this extraordinary paradox in human history—the persistence of war in spite of what seems its unreason—is that there is something in war, after all, that is analogous to this heroism there in the Antarctic zone,

*Germany and England. By J. A. Cramb. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company. \$1 net.

something that transcends reason; that in war and the right of war man has a possession which he values above religion, above industry, and above social comforts; that in war man values the power which it affords to life of rising above life, the power which the spirit of man possesses to pursue the ideal. In all life at its height, in thought, art, and action, there is a tendency to become transcendental; and if we examine the wars of England or of Germany in the past we find governing these wars throughout this higher power of heroism, or of something, at least, which transcends reason.

The lecturer's illustration of patriotism is clear and forcible; but his glorification of war becomes misty and transcendental, and when he attempts to reproduce for his hearers something corresponding to the Nietzscheism of Germany he begins to speak a language of which he has no understanding. For the clean-cut, shrill ideas of the German he has only a misty sentiment. Perhaps it is better that we should not try to reason too logically about some things; certainly it is better so, unless we are sure of our premises. And one thing we are longing for now is to see German militarism and its philosophy of empire fall before the power of British opportunism, however unreasoning that power may be, and however unlovely in its baser forms.

P. E. M.

Correspondence

MR. WELLS AND "VERNON LEE."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: I will not trouble your readers with a lengthy reply to the remarkable "message" apropos of myself which Miss Paget ("Vernon Lee") has written you. For the most part she answers herself, or what she has to say has been quite adequately counteracted by other articles and letters in your columns. But most of your readers will not have read the article by me in relation to which she writes, and as manifestly she has misread it in her excitement, you will, I know, permit me to correct her upon certain specific points.

She declares I want America to "starve" the German people. There was no such suggestion in my article. So far as the internal Austrian and German food supply is concerned, Germany can, with a little economy, go on feeding herself without importation for an indefinite time. But feeding her armies at the front is a different matter. As my article pointed out—a thing "Vernon Lee" has either overlooked or ignored—the Rhine is a natural supply canal for these armies, and the peculiar position of Holland renders it much more convenient to supply them from America via Rotterdam, if America sees fit to play in such a game, than from the threatened granaries of Pommern and Silesia. In the long struggle that is now reaching its climax, the question of supply is a dominating factor, and so I have no quarrel with the editor who threw up my phrase of VICTUALLING OUR ENEMIES into large type. That is exactly what I meant, our enemies, the German army, and exactly what "Vernon Lee" failed to grasp in her haste.

As for the "thousands of English men and

women" who share my feelings, and who, "shame and disgust" at my proposals, I ask you not to believe in their existence. Probably not a score of them have misread me, as "Vernon Lee" has done. I am indeed puzzled and distressed by these onslaughts of hers upon me, by her scarcely sane abuse of republican France, by her quotation, with approval, of such mere abuse as Professor Harnack's description of Russia as a "Byzantine and Mongol semi-barbarism." She even accuses me of flattering America, in spite of the fact that I sent her my little book upon "The Future in America" when it appeared. She will end, I know, by calling me "pro-British"—the last sin of which a true-born Englishman is capable. Whatever other losses or gains this war brings about, it has, I fear, lost England "Vernon Lee." But we shall do our best to reconquer her for the sake of many precious things that she gave us before she was won from us by Berlin.

H. G. WELLS.

London, October 2.

DR. CONYBEARE'S REPLY TO "VERNON LEE."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: May I pass some criticisms on "Vernon Lee's" "Message to Americans" in your issue of September 17? Her contention is that she speaks on behalf of English Liberals; I, too, am a Liberal, and come of a family distinguished during two centuries for its liberalism. Nor am I ill-disposed to Germany. I owe my *Weltanschauung*, such as it is, to Kant and the great German Idealists of a hundred years ago; I owe more to German than to English intellectuals, to the teaching, and—I am proud to be able to add—to the friendship of such men as Harnack, Hermann Unger, Krumbacher, von Dobschütz, Diels, Albrecht Dieterich, and many others, some of whom have been spared the fate of witnessing this terrible war.

"Vernon Lee" singles out for attack Mr. H. G. Wells, who may be the contemptible lightweight she supposes, but whom I anyhow decline to recognize as more than an ingenious imitator of the French author of "A Voyage Round the Moon." It appears that he wishes to see Germany starved into surrender. My opinion is that even in war she can probably stand years of starvation without being obliged by it to surrender; but I would fain ask "Vernon Lee" what she imagines Germany would do to England in this matter, had she the power. Were our oversea supplies of food stopped, we should be starved out in six months. Would Germany, therefore, scruple to stop them, if her fleet were strong enough to do so? Unto what end and against whom has she strained her every nerve and spared no expense to build her fleet? Had "Vernon Lee" made the most superficial study of newspapers read by her people, of the *Militär Wochenblatt* read by all her officers, she could entertain no doubt that Germany's aim is to starve us into abject surrender to her will. She finds it "atrocious" and "hideous" in Mr. Wells to contrive famine for Germany, but would apparently approve if Germany could inflict it on her own fair land of England; she is prepared to see the Prussians, after invasion of our shores, mete out to us the measure they are meting out to their Belgian victims.

We learn that "there are thousands of English men and women who feel only shame and disgust at the proposal Mr. Wells has ven-