SPENSER WILKINSON

BRITAIN AT BAY

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Содержание

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I
THE NATION AND THE PARTIES

"I do not believe in the perfection of the British constitution as an instrument of war … it is evident that there is something in your machinery that is wrong." These were the words of the late Marquis of Salisbury, speaking as Prime Minister in his place in the House of Lords on the 30th of January 1900. They amounted to a declaration by the British Government that it could not govern, for the first business of a Government is to be able to defend the State of which it has charge, that is, to carry on war. Strange to say, the people of England were undisturbed by so striking an admission of national failure.

On the 16th of March 1909 came a new declaration from another Prime Minister. Mr. Asquith, on the introduction of the Navy Estimates, explained to the House of Commons that the Government had been surprised at the rate at which the new German navy was being constructed, and at the rapid growth of Germany's power to build battleships. But it is the first duty of a Government to provide for national security and to provide

means to foresee. A Government that is surprised in a matter relating to war is already half defeated.

The creation of the German navy is the creation of means that could be used to challenge Great Britain's sea power and all that depends upon it. There has been no such challenge these hundred years, no challenge so formidable as that represented by the new German fleet these three hundred years. It brings with it a crisis in the national life of England as great as has ever been known; yet this crisis finds the British nation divided, unready and uncertain what leadership it is to expect.

The dominant fact, the fact that controls all others, is that from now onwards Great Britain has to face the stern reality of war, immediately by way of preparation and possibly at any moment by way of actual collision. England is drifting into a quarrel with Germany which, if it cannot be settled, involves a struggle for the mastery with the strongest nation that the world has yet seen —a nation that, under the pressure of necessity, has learnt to organise itself for war as for peace; that sets its best minds to direct its preparations for war; that has an army of four million citizens, and that is of one mind in the determination to make a navy that shall fear no antagonist. A conflict of this kind is the test of nations, not only of their strength but also of their righteousness or right to be. It has two aspects. It is first of all a quarrel and then a fight, and if we are to enter into it without fear of destruction we must fulfil two conditions: in the quarrel we must be in the right, in the fight we must win. The two conditions

are inseparable. If there is a doubt about the justice of our cause we shall be divided among ourselves, and it will be impossible for us to put forth the strength of a united nation.

Have we really a quarrel with Germany? Is she doing us any wrong? Some of our people seem to think so, though I find it hard to say in what the wrong consists. Are we doing her any wrong? Some Germans seem to think so, and it behoves us, if we can, to find out what the German grievance is.

Suppose that there is a cause for quarrel, hidden at present but sooner or later to be revealed. What likelihood is there that we shall be able to make good our case in arms, and to satisfy the world and posterity that we deserved to win?

Germany can build fleets as fast as we can, and although we have a start the race will not be easy for us; she has the finest school of war that ever existed, against which we have to set an Admiralty so much mistrusted that at this moment a committee of the Cabinet is inquiring into its efficiency.

Is it not time for us to find the answer to the question raised by Lord Salisbury nine years ago, to ascertain what it is that interferes with the perfection of the British constitution as an instrument of war, and to set right what is wrong with our machinery?

The truth is that we have ceased to be a nation; we have forgotten nationhood, and have become a conglomerate of classes, parties, factions, and sects. That is the disease. The remedy consists in reconstituting ourselves as a nation.

What is a nation? The inhabitants of a country constituted as one body to secure their corporate being and well-being. The nation is all of us, and its government is trusteeship for us all in order to give us peace and security, and in order that in peace and security we may make each other's lives worth living by doing each the best work he can. The nature of a nation may be seen by distinguishing it from the other nations outside and from the parties within. The mark of a nation is sovereignty, which means, as regards other nations, the right and the power to make peace with them or to carry on war against them, and which means, as regards those within, the right and the power to command them.

A nation is a people constituted as a State, maintaining and supporting a Government which is at once the embodiment of right and the wielder of force. If the right represented by the Government is challenged, either without or within, the Government asserts it by force, and in either case disposes, to any extent that may be required, of the property, the persons, and the lives of its subjects.

A party, according to the classical theory of the British constitution, is a body of men within the State who are agreed in regarding some measure or some principle as so vital to the State that, in order to secure the adoption of the measure or the acceptance of the principle, they are willing to sink all differences of opinion on other matters, and to work together for the one purpose which they are agreed in regarding as fundamental.

The theory of party government is based on the assumption that there must always be some measure or some principle in regard to which the citizens of the same country will differ so strongly as to subordinate their private convictions on other matters to their profound convictions in regard to the one great question. It is a theory of permanent civil war carried on through the forms of parliamentary debate and popular election, and, indeed, the two traditional parties are the political descendants of the two sides which in the seventeenth century were actually engaged in civil war. For the ordinary purposes of the domestic life of the country the system has its advantages, but they are coupled with grave drawbacks. The party system destroys the sincerity of our political life, and introduces a dangerous dilettantism into the administration of public business.

A deliberative assembly like the House of Commons can reach a decision only by there being put from the chair a question to which the answer must be either Yes or No. It is evidently necessary to the sincerity of such decisions that the answer given by each member shall in every case be the expression of his conviction regarding the right answer to the question put. If every member in every division were to vote according to his own judgment and conscience upon the question put, there would be a perpetual circulation of members between the Ayes to the right and the Noes to the left. The party system prevents this. It obliges each member on every important occasion to vote with his leaders and to follow the instruction of the whips. In this way

the division of opinion produced by some particular question or measure is, as far as possible, made permanent and dominant, and the freedom of thought and of deliberation is confined within narrow limits.

Thus there creeps into the system an element of insincerity which has been enormously increased since the extension of the franchise and the consequent organisation of parties in the country. Thirty or forty years ago the caucus was established in all the constituencies, in each of which was formed a party club, association, or committee, for the purpose of securing at parliamentary elections the success of the party candidate. The association, club, or committee consists, as regards its active or working portion, of a very small percentage of the voters even of its own party, but it is affiliated to the central organisation and in practice it controls the choice of candidates.

What is the result? That the affairs of the nation are entirely given over to be disputed between the two organised parties, whose leaders are compelled, in shaping their policy and in thinking about public affairs, to consider first and foremost the probable effect of what they will do and of what they will say upon the active members of the caucus of their own party in the constituencies. The frame of mind of the members of the caucus is that of men who regard the opposite caucus as the adversary. But the adversary of a nation can only be another nation.

In this way the leaders of both parties, the men who fill the places which, in a well-organised nation, would be assigned to

statesmen, are placed in it position in which statesmanship is almost impossible. A statesman would be devoted solely to the nation. He would think first, second, and third of the nation. Security would be his prime object, and upon that basis he would aim at the elevation of the characters and of the lives of the whole population. But our leaders cannot possibly think first, second, and third of the nation. They have to think at least as much of the next election and of the opinions of their supporters. In this way their attention is diverted from that observation of other nations which is essential for the maintenance of security. Moreover, they are obliged to dwell on subjects directly intelligible to and appreciable by the voters in the constituencies, and are thereby hindered from giving either the time or the attention which they would like to any of those problems of statesmanship which require close and arduous study for their solution. The wonder is in these conditions that they do their work so well, and maintain undiminished the reputation of English public men for integrity and ability.

Yet what at the present moment is the principle about which parties are divided? Is there any measure or any principle at issue which is really vital to Great Britain? Is there anything in dispute between the parties which would not be abandoned and forgotten at the first shot fired in a war between England and a great continental nation? I am convinced that that first shot must cause the scales to fall from men's eyes; that it must make every one realise that our divisions are comparative trifles and that for

years we have been wasting time over them. But if we wait for the shock of war to arouse us to a sense of reality and to estimate our party differences at their true value, it will be too late. We shall wring our hands in vain over our past blindness and the insight we shall then have obtained will avail us nothing.

The party system has another consequence which will not stand scrutiny in the light of reality; it is dilettantism in the conduct of the nation's principal business. Some of the chief branches of the executive work of government are the provinces of special arts and sciences, each of which to master requires the work of a lifetime. Of such a kind are the art of carrying on war, whether by sea or land, the art of conducting foreign relations, which involves a knowledge of all the other great States and their policies, and the direction of the educational system, which cannot possibly be properly conducted except by an experienced educator. But the system gives the direction of each of these branches to one of the political leaders forming the Cabinet or governing committee, and the practice is to consider as disqualified from membership of that committee any man who has given his life either to war, to foreign policy, or to education. Yet by its efficiency in these matters the nation must stand or fall. By all means let us be chary of lightly making changes in the constitution or in the arrangements of government. But, if the security and continued existence of the nation are in question, must we not scrutinise our methods of government with a view to make sure that they accord with the necessary conditions of

success in a national struggle for existence?

I am well aware that the train of thought to which I have tried to give expression is unpopular, and that most people think that any modification of the traditional party system is impracticable. But the question is not whether the system is popular; it is whether it will enable the country to stand in the hour of trial. If the system is inefficient and fails to enable the nation to carry on with success the functions necessary for its preservation and if at the same time it is impracticable to change it, then nothing can avert ruin from this country. Yet I believe that a very large number of my countrymen are in fact thinking each for himself the thoughts which I am trying to express. They are perhaps not the active members of the caucus of either party, but they are men who, if they see the need, will not shrink from exertions or from sacrifices which they believe to be useful or necessary to the country. It is to them that the following pages are an appeal. I appeal with some confidence because what I shall try to show to be necessary is not so much a change of institutions as a change of spirit; not a new constitution but a return to a true way of looking at public and private life. My contention is that the future of England depends entirely upon the restoration of duty, of which the nation is the symbol, to its proper place in our lives.

II
DEFEAT

Great Britain is drifting unintentionally and half unconsciously into a war with the German Empire, a State which has a population of sixty millions and is better organised for war than any State has ever been in modern times. For such a conflict, which may come about to-morrow, and unless a great change takes place must come about in the near future, Great Britain is not prepared.

The food of our people and the raw material of their industries come to this country by sea, and the articles here produced go by sea to their purchasers abroad. Every transaction carries with it a certain profit which makes it possible. If the exporter and the manufacturer who supplies him can make no profit they cannot continue their operations, and the men who work for them must lose their employment.

Suppose Great Britain to be to-morrow at war with one or more of the Great Powers of Europe. All the sailing vessels and slow steamers will stop running lest they should be taken by hostile cruisers. The fast steamers will have to pay war rates of insurance and to charge extra freights. Steamers ready to leave foreign ports for this country will wait for instructions and for news. On the outbreak of war, therefore, this over-

sea traffic must be greatly diminished in volume and carried on with enormously increased difficulties. The supply of food would be considerably reduced and the certainty of the arrival of any particular cargo would have disappeared. The price of food must therefore rapidly and greatly rise, and that alone would immediately impose very great hardships on the whole of the working class, of which a considerable part would be driven across the line which separates modern comfort from the starvation margin. The diminution in the supply of the raw materials of manufacture would be much greater and more immediate. Something like half the manufacturers of Great Britain must close their works for want of materials. But will the other half be able to carry on? Foreign orders they cannot possibly execute, because there can be no certainty of the delivery of the goods; and even if they could, the price at which they could deliver them with a profit would be much higher than it is in peace. For with a diminished supply the price of raw material must go up, the cost of marine insurance must be added, together with the extra wages necessary to enable the workmen to live with food at an enhanced price.

Thus the effect of the greater difficulty of sea communication must be to destroy the margin of profit which enables the British capitalist to carry on his works, while the effect of all these causes taken together on the credit system upon which our whole domestic economy reposes will perhaps be understood by business men. Even if this state of things should last only a few

months, it certainly involves the transfer to neutrals of all trade that is by possibility transferable. Foreign countries will give their orders for cotton, woollen, and iron goods to the United States, France, Switzerland, and Austro-Hungary, and at the conclusion of peace the British firms that before supplied them, if they have not in the meantime become bankrupt, will find that their customers have formed new connections.

The shrinkage of credit would bring a multitude of commercial failures; the diminution of trade and the cessation of manufactures a great many more. The unemployed would be counted by the million, and would have to be kept at the public expense or starve.

If in the midst of these misfortunes, caused by the mere fact of war, should come the news of defeat at sea, still more serious consequences must follow. After defeat at sea all regular and secure communication between Great Britain, her Colonies, and India comes to an end. With the terrible blow to Britain's reputation which defeat at sea must bring, what will be the position of the 100,000 British in India who for a century have governed a population of nearly 300,000,000? What can the Colonies do to help Great Britain under such conditions? For the command of the sea nothing, and even if each of them had a first-rate army, what would be the use of those armies to this country in her hour of need? They cannot be brought to Europe unless the British navy commands the sea.

These are some of the material consequences of defeat. But

what of its spiritual consequences? We have brought up our children in the pride of a great nation, and taught them of an Empire on which the sun never sets. What shall we say to them in the hour of defeat and after the treaty of peace imposed by the victor? They will say: "Find us work and we will earn our bread and in due time win back the greatness that has been lost." But how are they to earn their bread? In this country half the employers will have been ruined by the war. The other half will have lost heavily, and much of the wealth even of the very rich will have gone to keep alive the innumerable multitude of starving unemployed. These will be advised after the war to emigrate. To what country? Englishmen, after defeat, will everywhere be at a discount. Words will not describe, and the imagination cannot realise, the suffering of a defeated nation living on an island which for fifty years has not produced food enough for its population.

The material and spiritual results of defeat can easily be recognised by any one who takes the trouble to think about the question, though only experience either at first hand or supplied by history can enable a man fully to grasp its terrible nature. But a word must be said on the social and political consequences inseparable from the wreck of a State whose Government has been unable to fulfil its prime function, that of providing security for the national life. All experience shows that in such cases men do not take their troubles calmly. They are filled with passion. Their feelings find vent in the actions to which their

previous currents of thought tended. The working class, long accustomed by its leaders to regard the capitalists as a class with interests and aims opposed to its own, will hardly be able in the stress of unemployment and of famine to change its way of thinking. The mass of the workmen, following leaders whose judgment may not perhaps be of the soundest but who will undoubtedly sincerely believe that the doctrines with which they have grown up are true, may assail the existing social order and lay the blame of their misfortunes upon the class which has hitherto had the government of the country in its hands and has supplied the leaders of both political parties. The indignation which would inspire this movement would not be altogether without justification, for it cannot be denied that both political parties have for many years regarded preparation for war and all that belongs to it as a minor matter, subordinate to the really far less important questions relying upon which each side has sought to win sufficient votes to secure a party majority.

Why do I discuss the hypothesis of British defeat rather than that of British victory? Because it is the invariable practice of the masters of war to consider first the disagreeable possibilities and to make provision for them. But also because, according to every one of the tests which can be applied, the probability of defeat for Great Britain in the present state of Europe is exceedingly great. Rarely has a State unready for conflict been able to stand against a nation organised for war. The last of a long series of examples was the war between Russia and Japan, in which the

vast resources of a great Empire were exhausted in the struggle with a State so small as to seem a pigmy in comparison with her giant adversary. On the 10th of February 1904, the day when the news reached England that the Russo-Japanese war had begun, I gave as follows my reasons for thinking that Japan would win:—

"The hypothesis of a considerable Japanese success, at any rate at first, is considered rather than its opposite, because Japan has at present all the marks of a nation likely to do great things in war. It is not merely that she has transformed her government and her education, has introduced military institutions on the German model, especially compulsory training and that vivifying institution, a general staff. The present quarrel arises from the deliberate policy of Russia, pursuing aims that are incompatible with every Japanese tradition and every Japanese hope. The whole Japanese nation has for years been burning with the sense of wrongs inflicted by Russia, and into this war, as into the preparation for it, the whole people throws itself, mind, soul, and body. This is the condition which produces great strategical plans and extreme energy in their execution. The Japanese forces are well organised, armed, and equipped. They are intelligently led and follow with intelligence.

"Of Russia there is hardly evidence to show that the cause for which she is fighting has touched the imaginations or the feelings of more than a small fraction of the population. It is the war of a bureaucracy, and Russia may easily fail to develop either great leading, though her officers are instructed, or intelligent

following of the leaders by the rank and file. But the Russian troops are brave and have always needed a good deal of beating."

Substitute Great Britain for Russia and Germany for Japan in this forecast, which has been proved true, and every word holds good except two. We now know that Russia's policy was not deliberate; that her Government bungled into the war without knowing what it was doing. In just the same way British Governments have drifted blindly into the present difficult relations with Germany. Those in England who would push the country into a war with Germany are indeed not a bureaucracy, they are merely a fraction of one of the parties, and do not represent the mass of our people, who have no desire for such a war, and are so little aware of its possibility that they have never even taken the trouble to find out why it may come. A larger section of the other party is steeped in the belief that force, violence, and war are wicked in themselves, and ought therefore not to be thought about. It is a prejudice which, unless removed, may ruin this country, and there is no way of dissipating it except that of patient argument based upon observation of the world we live in. That way I shall attempt to follow in the next chapter.

III
FORCE AND RIGHT

> *"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies."*
> ***(Matt. v. 38-44).***

If there are any among us who adopt these words as the governing rule of their lives they will certainly cause no difficulty to the State in its military policy whatever that may be, and will find their natural places even in time of war to the public good. If the whole population were of their way of thinking and acting there would be no need to discuss war. An invader would not be resisted. His troops would be hospitably entertained and treated with affection. No opposition would be made to the change of Government which he would introduce, and the taxes which he imposed would be cheerfully paid. But there would be no State, except that created by the invader; and the problem of conduct

for those living the life described would arise when the State so set up issued its ordinances requiring every able-bodied man to become a competent soldier.

There are those who believe, or fancy they believe, that the words I have quoted involve the principle that the use of force or of violence between man and man, or between nation and nation, is wicked. To the man who thinks it right to submit to any violence or to be killed rather than to use violence in resistance, I have no reply to make. The world cannot conquer him and fear has no hold upon him. But even he can carry out his doctrine only to the extent of allowing himself to be ill-treated, as I will now convince him. Many years ago the people of South Lancashire were horrified by the facts reported in a trial for murder. In a village on the outskirts of Bolton lived a young woman, much liked and respected as a teacher in one of the Board schools. On her way home from school she was accustomed to follow a footpath through a lonely wood, and here one evening her body was found. She had been strangled by a ruffian who had thought in this lonely place to have his wicked will of her. She had resisted successfully and he had killed her in the struggle. Fortunately the murderer was caught and the facts ascertained from circumstantial evidence were confirmed by his confession. Now, the question I have to ask of the man who takes his stand on the passage I have quoted from the Gospel is: "What would have been your duty if you had been walking through that wood and come upon the girl struggling with the man who killed her?" This

is a crucial instance which, I submit, utterly destroys the doctrine that the use of violence is in itself wrong. The right or wrong is not in the employment of force but simply in the purpose for which it is used. What the case establishes, I think, is that to use violence in resistance to violent wrong is not only right but necessary.

The employment of force for the maintenance of right is the foundation of all civilised human life, for it is the fundamental function of the State, and apart from the State there is no civilisation, no life worth living. The first business of the State is to protect the community against violent interference from outside. This it does by requiring from its subjects whatever personal service and whatever sacrifice of property and of time may be necessary; and resistance to these demands, as well as to any injunctions whatever laid by the State upon its subjects, is unconditionally suppressed by force. The mark of the State is sovereignty, or the identification of force and right, and the measure of the perfection of the State is furnished by the completeness of this identification. In the present condition of English political thought it may be worth while to dwell for a few moments upon the beneficent nature of this dual action of the State.

Within its jurisdiction the State maintains order and law and in this way makes life worth living for its subjects. Order and law are the necessary conditions of men's normal activities, of their industry, of their ownership of whatever the State allows them to

possess—for outside of the State there is no ownership—of their leisure and of their freedom to enjoy it. The State is even the basis of men's characters, for it sets up and establishes a minimum standard of conduct. Certain acts are defined as unlawful and punished as crimes. Other acts, though not criminal, are yet so far subject to the disapproval of the courts that the man who does them may have to compensate those who suffer injury or damage in consequence of them. These standards have a dual origin, in legislation and precedent. Legislation is a formal expression of the agreement of the community upon the definition of crimes, and common law has been produced by the decisions of the courts in actions between man and man. Every case tried in a civil court is a conflict between two parties, a struggle for justice, the judgment being justice applied to the particular case. The growth of English law has been through an endless series of conflicts, and the law of to-day may be described as a line passing through a series of points representing an infinite number of judgments, each the decision of a conflict in court. For seven hundred years, with hardly an interruption, every judgment of a court has been sustained by the force of the State. The law thus produced, expressed in legislation and interpreted by the courts, is the foundation of all English conduct and character. Upon the basis thus laid there takes place a perpetual evolution of higher standards. In the intercourse of a settled and undisturbed community and of the many societies which it contains, arise a number of standards of behaviour which each man catches as

it were by infection from the persons with whom he habitually associates and to which he is obliged to conform, because if his conduct falls below them his companions will have nothing to do with him. Every class of society has its notions of what constitutes proper conduct and constrains its members to carry on their lives, so far as they are open to inspection, according to these notions. The standards tend constantly to improve. Men form an ideal of behaviour by observing the conduct of the best of their class, and in proportion as this ideal gains acceptance, find themselves driven to adopt it for fear of the social ostracism which is the modern equivalent of excommunication. Little by little what was at first a rarely attained ideal becomes a part of good manners. It established itself as custom and finally becomes part of the law.

Thus the State, in co-operation with the whole community, becomes the educator of its people. Standards of conduct are formed slowly in the best minds and exist at first merely in what Plato would have called "the intellectual sphere," or in what would have been called at a later date in Palestine the "kingdom of heaven." But the strongest impulse of mankind is to realise its ideals. Its fervent prayer, which once uttered can never cease, is "on earth as it is in heaven," and the ideals developed in man's spiritual life gradually take shape in laws and become prohibitions and injunctions backed by the forces of the State.

The State, however, is not an abstraction. For English people it means the United Kingdom; and if an Englishman wants to

realise what he owes to his country let him look back through its history and see how all that he values in the character of the men he most admires and all that is best in himself has gradually been created and realised through the ceaseless effort of his forefathers, carried on continuously from the time when the first Englishman crossed the North Sea until the present day. Other nations have their types of conduct, perhaps as good as our own, but Englishmen value, and rightly value, the ideals particularly associated with the life of their own country. Perhaps two of the commonest expressions convey peculiarly English views of character. We talk of "fair play" as the essence of just dealing between man and man. It is a conception we have developed from the national games. We describe ideal conduct as that of a gentleman. It is a condensation of the best part of English history, and a search for a definition of the function of Great Britain in the moral economy of the world will hardly find a better answer than that it is to stamp upon every subject of the King the character implied in these two expressions. Suppose the British State to be overthrown or to drop from its place among the great Powers of the world, these ideals of character would be discredited and their place would be taken by others.

The justification of the constraint exercised by the State upon its own citizens is the necessity for security, the obligation of self-defence, which arises from the fact that outside the State there are other States, each endowed like itself with sovereignty, each of them maintaining by force its conception of right. The

power of the State over its own subjects is thus in the last resort a consequence of the existence of other States. Upon the competition between them rests the order of the world. It is a competition extending to every sphere of life and in its acute form takes the shape of war, a struggle for existence, for the mastery or for right.

IV
ARBITRATION AND DISARMAMENT

To some people the place of war in the economy of nations appears to be unsatisfactory. They think war wicked and a world where it exists out of joint. Accordingly they devote themselves to suggestions for the abolition of war and for the discovery of some substitute for it. Two theories are common; the first, that arbitration can in every case be a substitute for war, the second that the hopes of peace would be increased by some general agreement for disarmament.

The idea of those who regard arbitration as a universal substitute for war appears to be that the relations between States can be put upon a basis resembling that of the relations between citizens in a settled and civilised country like our own. In Great Britain we are accustomed to a variety of means for settling disagreements between persons. There are the law courts, there are the cases in which recourse is had, with the sanction of the law courts, to the inquiry and decision of an arbitrator, and in all our sports we are accustomed to the presence of an umpire whose duty it is impartially to see that the rules of the game are observed and immediately to decide all points that might otherwise be doubtful.

The work of an umpire who sees that the rules of the game are observed is based upon the consent of the players of both sides. Without that consent there could be no game, and the consent will be found to be based upon the fact that all the players are brought up with similar traditions and with like views of the nature of the game. Where this unity does not exist, difficulties constantly arise, as is notoriously the case in international sports. The attempt has been made, with constantly increasing success, to mitigate the evils of war by the creation of institutions in some way analogous to that of the umpire in a game. The Declaration of London, recently published, is an agreement between the principal Powers to accept a series of rules concerning maritime war, to be administered by an International Prize Court.

The function of an arbitrator, usually to decide questions of fact and to assess compensation for inconvenience, most commonly the inconvenience occasioned to a private person by some necessary act of the State, also rests upon the consent of the parties, though in this case the consent is usually imposed upon them by the State through some legislative enactment or through the decision of a court. The action of a court of law, on the other hand, does not rest upon the consent of the parties. In a civil action the defendant may be and very often is unwilling to take any part in the proceedings. But he has no choice, and, whether he likes it or not, is bound by the decision of the court. For the court is the State acting in its judicial capacity with a view to insure that justice shall be done. The plaintiff alleges that the

defendant has done him some wrong either by breach of contract or otherwise, and the verdict or judgment determines whether or not this is the case, and, if it is, what compensation is due. The judgment once given, the whole power of the State will be used to secure its execution.

The business of a criminal court is the punishment of offenders whom it is the function of the State to discover, to bring to trial, and, when convicted, to punish. The prisoner's consent is not asked, and the judgment of the court is supported by the whole power of the State.

In the international sphere there is no parallel to the action either of a civil or of a criminal court. Civil and criminal jurisdiction are attributes of sovereignty, and over two independent States there is no sovereign power. If, therefore, it is desired to institute between two States a situation analogous to that by which the subjects of a single Government are amenable to judicial tribunals, the proper way is to bring the two States under one sovereignty. This can be effected, and is constantly effected, by one of two methods. Either the two States federate and form a united State, or one of them conquers and annexes the other. The former process has been seen in modern times in the formation of the United States of America: the latter formed the substance of the history of civilisation during the first three centuries before Christ, when the Roman State successively conquered, annexed, and absorbed all the other then existing States surrounding the basin of the Mediterranean.

The history of no State justifies the belief that order and justice can successfully be maintained merely by the action of umpires and of arbitrators. Every State worth the name has had to rely upon civil and criminal courts and upon law enforced by its authority, that is, upon a series of principles of right expressed in legislation and upon an organisation of force for the purpose of carrying those principles into practical effect.

It appears, then, that so far from the experience of States justifying the view that it is wrong to employ force, the truth is that right or law, unless supported by force, is ineffective, that the objection in principle to any use of force involves anarchy, or the cessation of the State, and that the wish to substitute judicial tribunals for war as a means of settling disputes between State and State is a wish to amalgamate under a single Government all those States which are to benefit by the substitution.

The reasonable attitude with regard to arbitration is to accept it whenever the other side will accept it. But if the adversary refuses arbitration and insists upon using force, what course is open to any State but that of resisting force by force?

Arbitration has from the earliest times been preferred in most of those cases to which it was applicable, that is, in cases in which there was a basis of common view or common tradition sufficient to make agreement practicable. But wherever there has been a marked divergence of ideals or a different standard of right, there has been a tendency for each side to feel that to submit its conscience or its convictions of right, its sense of what is most

sacred in life, to an outside judgment would involve a kind of moral suicide. In such cases every nation repudiates arbitration and prefers to be a martyr, in case of need, to its sense of justice. It is at least an open question whether the disappearance of this feeling would be a mark of progress or of degeneration. At any rate it is practically certain that the period when it will have disappeared cannot at present be foreseen.

The abolition of war, therefore, involves the abolition of independent States and their amalgamation into one. There are many who have hoped for this ideal, expressed by Tennyson when he dreamed of

"The Parliament of man, the Federation of the world."

That it is the ultimate destiny of mankind to be united under a single Government seems probable enough, but it is rash to assume that that result will be reached either by a process of peaceful negotiation, or by the spread of the imperfect methods of modern democratic government. The German Empire, with its population of sixty millions, educated by the State, disciplined by the State, relying on the State, and commanded by the State, is as potent in comparison with the less disciplined and less organised communities which surround it as was, in the third century before Christ, the Roman State in comparison with the disunited multitude of Greek cities, the commercial oligarchy of Carthage, and the half-civilised tribes of Gaul and Spain. Unless

the other States of Europe can rouse themselves to a discipline as sound and to an organisation as subtle as those of Prussia and to the perception of a common purpose in the maintenance of their independence, the union of Europe under a single Government is more likely to be brought about by the conquering hand of Germany than by the extension of democratic institutions and of sentimental good understandings.

Proposals for disarmament stand on an entirely different footing from proposals to agree to arbitration. The State that disarms renounces to the extent of its disarmament the power to protect itself. Upon what other power is it suggested that it should rely? In the last analysis the suggestion amounts to a proposal for the abolition of the State, or its abandonment of its claim to represent the right. Those who propose agreements for disarmament imagine that the suggestion if adopted would lead to the establishment of peace. Have they considered the natural history of peace as one of the phenomena of the globe which we inhabit? The only peace of any value is that between civilised nations. It rests either upon the absence of dispute between them or upon an equilibrium of forces. During the last few centuries there has usually been at the end of a great European war a great European congress which has regulated for the time being the matters which were in dispute, and the treaty thus negotiated has remained for a long time the basis of the relations between the Powers. It is always a compromise, but a compromise more or less acceptable to all parties, in which they

acquiesce until some change either by growth or decay makes the conditions irksome. Then comes a moment when one or more of the States is dissatisfied and wishes for a change. When that has happened the dissatisfied State attempts to bring about the change which it desires, but if the forces with which its wish is likely to be opposed are very great it may long acquiesce in a state of things most distasteful to it. Let there be a change in the balance of forces and the discontented State will seize the opportunity, will assert itself, and if resisted will use its forces to overcome opposition. A proposal for disarmament must necessarily be based upon the assumption that there is to be no change in the system, that the *status quo* is everywhere to be preserved. This amounts to a guarantee of the decaying and inefficient States against those which are growing and are more efficient. Such an arrangement would not tend to promote the welfare of mankind and will not be accepted by those nations that have confidence in their own future. That such a proposal should have been announced by a British Government is evidence not of the strength of Great Britain, not of a healthy condition of national life, but of inability to appreciate the changes which have been produced during the last century in the conditions of Europe and the consequent alteration in Great Britain's relative position among the great Powers. It was long ago remarked by the German historian Bernhardi that Great Britain was the first country in Europe to revive in the modern world the conception of the State. The feudal conception identified the State with the

monarch. The English revolution of 1688 was an identification of the State with the Nation. But the nationalisation of the State, of which the example was set in 1688 by Great Britain, was carried out much more thoroughly by France in the period that followed the revolution of 1789; and in the great conflict which ensued between France and the European States the principal continental opponents of France were compelled to follow her example, and, in a far greater degree than has ever happened in England, to nationalise the State. It is to that struggle that we must turn if we are to understand the present condition of Europe and the relations of Great Britain to the European Powers.

V
THE NATIONALISATION OF WAR

The transformation of society of which the French Revolution was the most striking symptom produced a corresponding change in the character of war.

By the Revolution the French people constituted itself the State, and the process was accompanied by so much passion and so much violence that it shortly involved the reconstituted nation in a quarrel with its neighbours the Germanic Empire and Prussia, which rapidly developed into a war between France and almost all the rest of Europe. The Revolution weakened and demoralised the French army and disorganised the navy, which it deprived of almost all its experienced officers. When the war began the regular army was supplemented by a great levy of volunteers. The mixed force thus formed, in spite of early successes, was unable to stand against the well-disciplined armies of Austria and Prussia, and as the war continued, while the French troops gained solidity and experience, their numbers had to be increased by a levy *en masse* or a compulsory drafting of all the men of a certain age into the army. In this way the army and the nation were identified as they had never been in modern Europe before, and in the fifth year of the war a leader was found in the person of General Bonaparte, who had

imbued himself with the principles of the art of war, as they had been expounded by the best strategists of the old French army, and who had thus thought out with unprecedented lucidity the method of conducting campaigns. His mastery of the art of generalship was revealed by his success in 1796, and as the conflict with Europe continued, he became the leader and eventually the master of France. Under his impulse and guidance the French army, superior to them in numbers, organisation, and tactical skill, crushed one after another the more old-fashioned and smaller armies of the great continental Powers, with the result that the defeated armies, under the influence of national resentment after disaster, attempted to reorganise themselves upon the French model. The new Austrian army undertook its revenge too soon and was defeated in 1809; but the Prussian endeavour continued and bore fruit, after the French disasters in Russia of 1812, in the national rising in which Prussia, supported by Russia and Austria and assisted by the British operations in the Peninsula, overthrew the French Empire in 1814.

After the definitive peace, deferred by the hundred days, but finally forced upon France on the field of Waterloo, the Prussian Government continued to foster the school of war which it had founded in the period of humiliation. Prussian officers trained in that school tried to learn the lessons of the long period of war which they had passed through. What they discovered was that war between nations, as distinct from war between dynasties or royal houses, was a struggle for existence in which each adversary

risked everything and in which success was to be expected only from the complete prostration of the enemy. In the long run, they said to themselves, the only defence consists in striking your adversary to the ground. That being the case, a nation must go into war, if war should become inevitable, with the maximum force which it can possibly produce, represented by its whole manhood of military age, thoroughly trained, organised, and equipped. The Prussian Government adhered to these ideas, to which full effect was given in 1866, when the Prussian army, reorganised in 1860, crushed in ten days the army of Austria, and in 1870 when, in a month from the first shot fired, it defeated one half of the French army at Gravelotte and captured the other half at Sedan. These events proved to all continental nations the necessity of adopting the system of the nation in arms and giving to their whole male population, up to the limits of possibility, the training and the organisation necessary for success in war.

The principle that war is a struggle for existence, and that the only effective defence consists in the destruction of the adversary's force, received during the age of Napoleon an even more absolute demonstration at sea than was possible on land. Great Britain, whether she would or no, was drawn into the European conflict. The neglect of the army and of the art of war into which, during the eighteenth century, her Governments had for the most part fallen, made it impracticable for her to take the decisive part which she had played in the days of William III. and of Marlborough in the struggle against the French

army; her contributions to the land war were for the most part misdirected and futile. Her expeditions to Dunkirk, to Holland, and to Hanover embarrassed rather than materially assisted the cause of her allies. But her navy, favourably handicapped by the breakdown, due to the Revolution, of the French navy, eventually produced in the person of Nelson a leader who, like Napoleon, had made it the business of his life to understand the art of war. His victories, like Napoleon's, were decisive, and when he fell at Trafalgar the navies of continental Europe, which one after another had been pressed into the service of France, had all been destroyed.

Then were revealed the prodigious consequences of complete victory at sea, which were more immediate, more decisive, more far-reaching, more irrevocable than on land. The sea became during the continuance of the war the territory of Great Britain, the open highway along which her ships could pass, while it was closed to the ships of her adversaries. Across that secure sea a small army was sent to Spain to assist the national and heroic, though miserably organised, resistance made by the Spanish people against the French attempt at conquest. The British Government had at last found the right direction for such military force as it possessed. Sir John Moore's army brought Napoleon with a great force into the field, but it was able to retire to its own territory, the sea. The army under Wellington, handled with splendid judgment, had to wait long for its opportunity, which came when Napoleon with the Grand Army had plunged into

the vast expanse of Russia. Wellington, marching from victory to victory, was then able to produce upon the general course of the war an effect out of all proportion to the strength of the force which he commanded or of that which directly opposed him.

While France was engaged in her great continental struggle England was reaping, all over the world, the fruits of her naval victories. Of the colonies of her enemies she took as many as she wanted, though at the peace she returned most of them to their former owners. Of the world's trade she obtained something like a monopoly. The nineteenth century saw the British colonies grow up into so many nations and the British administration of India become a great empire. These developments are now seen to have been possible only through the security due to the fact that Great Britain, during the first half of the nineteenth century, had the only navy worth considering in the world, and that during the second half its strength greatly preponderated over that of any of the new navies which had been built or were building. No wonder that when in 1888 the American observer, Captain Mahan, published his volume "The Influence of Sea Power upon History," other nations besides the British read from that book the lesson that victory at sea carried with it a prosperity, an influence, and a greatness obtainable by no other means. It was natural for Englishmen to draw the moral which was slumbering in the national consciousness that England's independence, her empire, and her greatness depended upon her sea power. But it was equally natural that other nations should draw a different

moral and should ask themselves why this tremendous prize, the primacy of nations and the first place in the world, should for ever belong to the inhabitants of a small island, a mere appendage to the continent of Europe.

This question we must try to answer. But before entering upon that inquiry I will ask the reader to note the great lesson of the age of Napoleon and of Nelson. It produced a change in the character of war, which enlarged itself from a mere dispute between Governments and became a struggle between nations. The instrument used was no longer a small standing army, but the able-bodied male population in arms. Great Britain indeed still retained her standing army, but for the time she threw her resources without stint into her navy and its success was decisive.

VI
THE BALANCE OF POWER

We have seen what a splendid prize was the result of British victory at sea, supplemented by British assistance to other Powers on land, a century ago. We have now to ask ourselves first of all how it came about that Great Britain was able to win it, and afterwards whether it was awarded once for all or was merely a challenge cup to be held only so long as there should be no competitor.

The answer to the first question is a matter of history. England was peculiarly favoured by fortune or by fate in the great struggles through which, during a period of three hundred years, she asserted and increased her superiority at sea until a century ago it became supremacy. She rarely had to fight alone. Her first adversary was Spain. In the conflict with Spain she had the assistance of the Dutch Provinces. When the Dutch were strong enough to become her maritime rivals she had for a time the co-operation of France. Then came a long period during which France was her antagonist. At the beginning of this epoch William III. accepted the British crown in order to be able to use the strength of England to defend his native country, Holland. His work was taken up by Marlborough, whose first great victory was won in co-operation with the Imperial commander, Prince

Eugene. From that time on, each of the principal wars was a European war in which France was fighting both by sea and land, her armies being engaged against continental foes, while Great Britain could devote her energies almost exclusively to her navy. In the Seven Years' War it was the Prussian army which won the victories on land, while small British forces were enabled by the help of the navy to win an Empire from France in Canada, and to lay the foundations of the British Empire in India. In the war of American Independence, Great Britain for once stood alone, but this was the one conflict which contributed little or nothing towards establishing the ascendency of the British navy. Great Britain failed of her object because that ascendency was incomplete. Then came the wars of the French Revolution and Empire in which the British navy was the partner of the Austrian, Prussian, Russian, and Spanish armies.

These are the facts which we have to explain. We have to find out how it was that so many continental nations, whether they liked it or not, found themselves, in fighting their own battles, helping to bring about the British predominance at sea. It must be remembered that land warfare involves much heavier sacrifices of life than warfare at sea, and that though Great Britain no doubt spent great sums of money not merely in maintaining her navy but also in subsidising her allies, she could well afford to do so because the prosperity of her over-sea trade, due to her naval success, made her the richest country in Europe. The other nations that were her allies might not unnaturally feel that they

had toiled and that Great Britain had gathered the increase. What is the explanation of a co-operation of which in the long run it might seem that one partner has had the principal benefit?

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.