

Le Queux William

The Way to Win



William Le Queux
The Way to Win

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=23156499

The Way to Win:

Содержание

Foreword	4
Chapter One	6
Chapter Two	22
Chapter Three	40
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	51

Le Queux William

The Way to Win

Foreword

I do not think anyone who has studied the progress of the War with care and patience can deny that, during the past few months, a mighty change has come over the aspect of the great struggle.

A year ago, when I wrote "Britain's Deadly Peril," the fortunes of the Allies appeared to be at the lowest ebb. Indomitable energy and perseverance have since worked wonders. To-day we plainly see that the conquering march of the Teuton has been arrested and the process of forcing back his hordes has begun.

Britain – the fierce Lion of Britain – is at last fully aroused to the momentous issues which hang on the decision, and has flung herself with all her unrivalled tenacity, and with a unanimity unparalleled in our history, into the titanic conflict.

Russia, France, and Italy have responded to the call with equal nobility. To-day the Allies are more than a match for the Hun in manpower; they are equal to them, at least, in the supply of munitions, the lack of which so badly hampered our cause last year. Finally, the great new masses of the British Army, straining at the leash, are eagerly awaiting the signal to hurl themselves at the foe for his destruction.

The British Navy, silent and invincible, holds the seas of all the world, and Germany and her Allies are to-day feeling the pinch of war in most deadly earnest. Prices in enemy countries are rising by leaps and bounds; the food supply is beginning to fail; money is lacking; the value of the mark is falling, and there is every prospect of a shortage of men – cannon-fodder they were once called by Germans – in the near future.

We are on the eve of great events.

Already we hear the ominous rumblings which prelude the breaking of the storm. The great clash is at hand which, for good or ill, shall settle the destinies of our world for many generations to come – perhaps for ever.

Can we doubt the issue? Assuredly not. The spirit of our dear old Britain and her glorious Allies is unbroken, and still unbreakable. Cost what it may, they are fully determined to smash, once and for ever, the accursed Teuton attempt to dominate the world and throw back the clock of civilisation for centuries. There will be no faltering and no turning back on Great Britain's part until that great end is attained.

Courage and resolution and a hard fist are the keys of the situation for the Allies. We have them in abundant measure. And unless Britain is unthinkable false to all the traditions that have made her great, our triumph in the Near To-morrow is assured.

William Le Queux.

Devonshire Club, London, March, 1916.

Chapter One

The Rift in the Clouds

If we could imagine a being from another planet dropped suddenly on this old earth of ours and left with the aid of maps to figure out for himself the real position of the world-war, we could readily imagine that it would seem to him that the Germans were winning “hands down.”

Perhaps there would be a good deal of excuse for such a belief.

He would see, in the first place, that the Germans had overrun and captured the whole of Belgium except one very small portion. He would see that the greater part of Northern France was in their undisputed possession. He would see that they had driven the Russians from Poland and penetrated far within the boundaries of Russia proper.

He would also see that they had almost completely conquered or cajoled the Balkan States, and that German trains were running from the North Sea to Constantinople. He would see them holding apparently impregnable lines of defences against forces at least as strong as their own – probably much stronger. He would see them or their Allies holding up British forces in Persia and in Mesopotamia. He would see the Italians apparently firmly held along the mountainous boundaries of the Austrian Empire. He would see that a great British army had been

driven out of Gallipoli. He would unquestionably come to the conclusion that the cause of the Allies was a lost cause, and would probably conclude that the best thing they could do would be to make a speedy peace on the best terms the victors could be induced to grant.

And he would be unquestionably wrong in his deduction, even though we admit the accuracy of his facts.

For, like the thoughtless and the whimperers among us, he would for want of knowledge leave out of his consideration certain hard facts which, properly considered, would reverse his judgment. Like the thoughtless and the whimperers, he would judge too much from mere appearances and would fail to see the real essential things. He would fail to see the wood for the trees; he would mistake the shadow for the substance. Just so the German people to-day are making the mistake of thinking that the occupation of enemy territory, a mere temporary advantage gained through treacherous preparation for war at a time when they professed to be working for peace, constitutes the victory that must be theirs before they could hope to gain the world-dominion upon which, as we now know, their hearts and the hearts of their rulers have been set for the last forty years.

For eighteen months the civilised world has been struggling against the most formidable menace to its liberties by which it has ever been faced. For eighteen months we have seen the enemy apparently going on from triumph to triumph. We have seen the devastation of Belgium, the crucifixion of a little people whose

only wish was that they should be allowed to live their happy lives in peace, and whose only crime was that they dared to resist the Prussian bully. We have seen the martyrdom of Poland. We have seen the very heart of France – incomparable Paris – threatened with destruction.

We have seen the stately memorials of a great civilisation, such as Germany has never known and never can know, wrecked and plundered. We have seen innocent civilians murdered in hundreds, women and children sent to death or a far worse fate. We have seen the ruin of Serbia. We have lost thousands of our best and bravest sons. We have seen the tragic failure in the Gallipoli Peninsula – itself a mere incident of the world-war, yet one of the greatest military undertakings upon which we have ever embarked. We have failed conspicuously to protect the little nations in whose cause we drew the sword, and who have gone down in ruin under the iron heel of a ferocious tyranny beside which the worst oppression of historic times seems mild in comparison. Can it be a matter of wonder if the cry, “How long, O Lord, how long?” goes up from the fainting heart of outraged civilisation?

Yet the darkest hour is ever the herald of the dawn; and if to-day we try with a single mind to penetrate the fog and mystery with which this greatest of all wars is surrounded, we shall see that there is really and truly a rift in the clouds. No doubt we have still many days of storm and stress before us. The end is not yet. But, in the noble language of the King, the goal is drawing

into sight. The sun of victory is not yet shining fully upon us, but none the less the dawn is at hand. Already its first faint gleams are breaking in upon our eyes; there are abundant signs, if we lift up our hearts and our courage, that the long period of gloom and depression is passing away.

Properly to understand the position as it exists to-day we must look backward to the years 1870 and 1871, for in those years was born the spirit of aggression and arrogance which ever since has been the driving power of Germany. After years of preparation, when so far as possible everything was ready, Germany fell suddenly upon a France torn by internal dissensions, weak through want of preparation, and utterly unready for war. Naturally there could be but one end to such a conflict, and a few short months saw France helpless beneath the heel of the invader. Germany emerged from that war with almost incalculable profit, firmly imbued with the idea that she was invincible, and convinced that at any moment she chose she could reach out her greedy hands and grasp the sceptre of European domination. Then, as she thought, she could with safety enter upon a conflict with an England which had grown over-rich and perhaps over-lazy. Then the real enemy could be crushed, and the world-dominion of which her megalomaniac rulers dreamed would be within her grasp.

If a nation has determined upon war, there is never any lack of excuse, and Germany chose her time well. Her blow fell at a time when no single one of the Allies was prepared for war.

That fact alone fixes absolutely the responsibility for the present appalling conflict, and in the days to come the unanimous verdict of history will be that the War was deliberately provoked by Germany through sheer greed and lust of power.

For, be it remembered, there was no legitimate ambition before Germany which she was not perfectly free to enjoy. Her trade was free and unhampered, the seas were as open to her use as to our own, she possessed vast colonial dominions which gave her every opportunity for all the legitimate expansion of which she could dream for centuries to come. She had grown rich and prosperous in the exercise of the freedom which she has ever been the first to deny to others. No one menaced her or sought to do her injury. But she was the *nouveau riche* among the nations. She had been poisoned for a long course of years with the false doctrine that the German was something essentially superior to the peoples of other races, and she owes her approaching downfall, which is as certain as the rising of to-morrow's sun, to the blind teachers of the blind who have imbued her with that spirit of envy and arrogance which may be as fatal to a nation as to an individual.

We all know only too well what happened when war broke out. Germany, with her armies trained to the hour after years of patient preparation, with her forces ready to the last man and the last gun, shamelessly broke her plighted word with the invasion of Belgium. She had counted that there, at least, she would meet with no resistance; she could not realise that a little

people, even to save its honour, would dare to oppose the onrush of her countless hordes. In that she made her first and, perhaps, her greatest mistake. Just as she thought that England would not draw the sword for a "scrap of paper," so she thought that Belgium would not dare to resist.

We know now that she was wrong; we know, too, that the heroism of the Belgians surely saved Europe in those first days by gaining the priceless time which enabled France and England to throw their scanty forces across the path of the invader, which led ultimately to the great battle of the Marne, that titanic conflict which surely and decisively smashed once and for ever the German plans. In spite of all that has happened since, in spite of the apparent victories Germany has won, in spite of the territories she has occupied, the defeat of the Marne marked the beginning of her final overthrow.

But the peril was appalling. France, Russia, and Britain were alike unprepared for war, short of men, short of munitions, short of everything which would have enabled them at once to meet the common enemy on anything like equal terms. The days are gone for ever when victory can be won by men alone; modern war is too machine-like in its developments, the importance of supplies and organisation is far too great to give a poorly equipped army the slightest chance of success. Not men alone, but munitions are the secret of success to-day, and every single advantage that Germany has won since war broke out has been won by her superiority in mechanical equipment. Her men, considered

individually, are certainly not the equals of either the French or the Russians or the British; they have neither the dash of the French, nor the dogged courage and endurance of the Russians, nor the personal *sang-froid* and cool initiative of the British. But Germany had the numbers and the equipment, and to numbers and equipment alone she owes such successes as she has gained.

Caught unprepared at the outset of war, the Allies were naturally in a position which must well have seemed hopeless. Germany reaped to the full the advantages which she had sought in long preparation for war under the guise of peace. Her armies plunged forward with resistless momentum until they were within sight of the very gates of Paris, and in the eyes of the world it was merely a matter of time as to when she would occupy the French capital. Then came Von Kluck's amazing blunder, the swift stroke of the French and British against the German right wing, and the precipitate retreat which led to the defeat at the Marne. From that day, in spite of apparent successes, the fortunes of Germany have been on the wane.

There was no mistake about the reply of civilisation to the German menace. France, Russia, and England threw down the gauntlet in the most unmistakable terms in the historic declaration that neither would conclude a separate peace without the others. That, we have now to recognise, is one of the main facts which must operate most powerfully in bringing about the final defeat of Germany. In no particular can she hope to rival the resources of the Allies, and so long as the Allies hang together they are

unmistakably on the road to final victory. It is for this reason that at the present moment it is the main object of German diplomacy to sow distrust and suspicion among the partners in the Quadruple Entente. Their one and only hope – and they know it – is to provoke a quarrel among the Allies which would not merely rob the Allies of all hope of final victory, but would give the Huns and their dupes a reasonable chance – indeed, more than a reasonable chance – of snatching triumph from the very jaws of defeat.

There is a school of croakers very much in evidence in England at present who can see nothing of good in anything which their own country has done and is doing. They remind one of Gilbert's

Idiot who praises in enthusiastic tone

Each century but this, and every country but his own.

They are, of course, always with us, but at the present moment they are more than usually aggressive, and we notice them perhaps more than is good for us. They are the chief source of that dangerous form of pessimism which we see exemplifying itself in a constant belittling of the enormous efforts and the enormous sacrifices which this country has made. According to these mischievous propagandists, nothing we do or have done can possibly be sufficient or right. The effects of this perpetual “calamity howling” on our own people is bad enough; it is far worse upon the peoples of the Allied countries and the neutrals, because, not understanding our national peculiarities, they are

apt to take us at a wholly absurd valuation and to think that, as our own people are constantly accusing us of slackness in a war in which we have so much at stake, there must be something in the charge. If plenty of mud is thrown, some of it is tolerably sure to stick, and there can be no doubt that the perpetual depreciation of British efforts by people in this country has had a most dangerous effect, and has, in fact, played the German game to perfection both here and abroad.

Those who wish to form an adequate realisation of what Britain has really done in the cause of civilisation should try to take a longer view, and try also to throw their minds backward to the condition of affairs which existed when the declaration of war came eighteen months ago. They should try, in fact, to learn something of the lessons taught by our past history.

We can start with the indisputable and undisputed fact that so far as the war on land was concerned this country was entirely unprepared to take up the rôle it has since assumed. That is a proposition which not even the Germans, who are so ready to accuse England of having caused the War, can very well dispute. Throughout our history we have been a naval and not a military Power, though it is of course true that, judged by the standards of other days, we have now and again put forward very considerable military efforts.

But it was many a long year since British troops had fought on the Continent of Europe, and it is safe to assume that the great majority of people in this country, had they been asked, would

have replied without hesitation that we should never again take part in the land fighting in a continental war.

Now it must be obvious to anyone who takes the trouble to give the matter a moment's thought that, for the purposes of war as it is understood by the great military nations of Europe, the British Army as it existed in August, 1914, was hopelessly inadequate. Our real strength lay on the sea, where it has always lain. It is true that, for its size, the British force which was thrown into Flanders in the early days of the struggle was perhaps the most perfectly trained and equipped army that ever took the field.

But no one will contend that it was adequate in size, and we know that the Germans regarded it as a "contemptible little army" that was to be brushed aside with hardly an effort by the German hordes. It consisted of perhaps 120,000 men, and undoubtedly, as our French friends have generously admitted, it played a part worthy of "the best and highest traditions" of our race. But it was not an army on the continental scale.

What has been done since? How have we taken up the task of creating forces which might be regarded as commensurate to meet the menace by which civilisation found itself faced?

Our "contemptible little army," thanks to the genius of Lord Kitchener, has grown until to-day it numbers something in the neighbourhood of four million men. That is a fact which the world knows and recognises, and in itself alone it is sufficient to refute the contention of those who are to be found preaching in and out of season that Britain's efforts have been lamentably

inadequate. Great armies are not to be made in a day or a year, they do not spring fully armed from the earth, and the fact that we, a naval rather than a military Power, have in the course of eighteen months raised and equipped forces on such a scale ought to be sufficient to confound those shallow critics who are eternally bewailing our supposed “slackness,” which, as a matter of fact, has no existence outside their own disordered imaginations. I do not believe there is to be found to-day a military writer whose opinion is of any value who would not agree that the effort which Britain has made is one of the most stupendous in all military history.

In France, in Russia, and in Italy everyone whose authority is regarded as having any substantial basis is agreed on the point, and the Germans themselves, however they may affect to sneer at our army of “hirelings,” know a great deal too much about military matters not to recognise that one of the very gravest of their perils is the growing military power of England. That power will be exercised to the full when the time comes, and it will assuredly be found to be of the very greatest importance in bringing about the overthrow of German hopes and ambitions.

We all know – the whole world knows – why the military power of England has not yet reached its full majesty. We all know that in the War of to-day a superabundance of munitions is demanded which none could have expected from the history of the past. Every form of military stores – guns, rifles, shell, ammunition – all must be provided on a scale of colossal

magnitude.

It is the fact that Germany alone of all the warring nations partly realised this, and in her careful preparations for a war of her own seeking, for which she chose her own time, accumulated in the days of peace such enormous reserves of munitions as she hoped would render her to a large extent independent of manufacture during the actual period of fighting. It is certain that Germany hoped to overthrow Russia and France in a series of swift, brief attacks without trenching dangerously upon her reserve stocks. We know now that she was wrong; but we know, too, that she came within an ace of success.

That she realised her error and embarked upon the manufacture of munitions on a vast scale is true, but none the less it is also true that she cannot hope to compete in this respect with the united resources of the Allies once they get into their full stride. Slowly, perhaps, but none the less surely, she is being overtaken even in the department which she made almost exclusively her own, and the day is coming when she will have not the remotest prospect of keeping up an adequate reply to the storm of high explosives which will break upon her lines east, west, north, and south. When that day comes – and it may be nearer than most of us think – we shall see the swiftest of changes in the present position of the War. There will be an end at last to the long deadlock in which we and our Allies have been forced to act on the defensive.

Already, indeed, the change is in sight. Germany to-day, in

spite of her frantic struggles, is absolutely and firmly held in a ring of steel. She is, in every real sense of the word, on the defensive; her spasmodic attacks are purely defensive in their origin and conception, and the steadily increasing pressure of her foes must sooner or later find and break through some weak spot in lines which are already seriously extended and must soon wear thin.

I do not pretend for a moment that everything has gone as well as we could wish; I do not pretend that there have not been mistakes, delays, lack of decision, lack of foresight. No war was ever fought without mistakes; we are not a race of supermen. But I do say that we have made such an effort as has perhaps never been made in history before to meet a series of conditions of which neither we in particular nor the world at large has ever experienced.

The nation that could wage war without making mistakes would very speedily dominate the world.

If the Germans had not made mistakes at least as great as those of the Allies, they would long ago have won a supreme and crushing victory which would have left the whole of Europe prostrate at their feet. Whereas what do we see to-day? The plain, unalterable fact is that in her sudden assault upon nations wholly unprepared for it Germany has not won a single success of the nature which is decisive. She did not succeed in "knocking out" either of the enemies who really count, and she soon found herself condemned to a long and dragging war of the very nature

which all her experts, for years past, have admitted must be fatal to German hopes and ambitions. Germany has always postulated for success swift and shattering blows; she believed she could deal such blows at her enemies in detail before she was defeated by a prepared unity against which she must be powerless. She hoped to shatter France before the slow-moving Russians could get into their stride, and leave her ruined and crushed while she turned to meet the menace from the East. She counted on winning the hegemony of Europe before she could be checked by a combination ready to meet her on more than level terms. There she made the first and greatest of her mistakes, a mistake from the effects of which she can never recover.

And will anyone contend that, in bringing the German design to hopeless ruin, Britain has not played a worthy part? Will anyone be found bold enough to assert that the position on the Continent to-day would not have been very widely different if Britain had chosen the ignoble part and refused to unsheath the sword in defence of those great principles for which our forefathers in all ages have been ready to fight and to die? Will anyone venture to express a doubt that, but for the assistance of Britain, France must have been crushed? And, with France helpless and Britain neutral, what would have been Russia's chance of escaping disaster?

I need hardly say that I do not put these suggestions forward with any idea of belittling the part – the very great and very heroic part – which has been played in the great world-tragedy

by France and Russia. But I do seriously suggest – and French and Russian writers have been the first generously to admit it – that England's assistance has made their campaigns possible.

If we have not done the terrific fighting which has been done by France and Russia, we have at least borne a very respectable share in the fray; we can leave others to speak for us on this score. But we have supported our Allies in other fields; we have, to a very large extent, found the sinews of war; we have made of our land the workshop of the Allies, and poured out a stream of munitions which has been of the utmost value, even if it has not made all the difference between victory and defeat. And, above all and beyond all, we have, by our sea power, practically carried the campaigns of our Allies on our backs. Thanks to our unchallenged supremacy afloat, the Allies have been able to move in all parts of the world with a security unknown in any other war in history. While the German Fleet skulks in the fastnesses of the Kiel Canal, and the German flag has disappeared from the ocean highways of the world, the ships of the Allies move almost unhindered on their daily business, the endless supplies of men and munitions go to and fro unchallenged except by the lurking submarines of the enemy, which, for all their boastings, are powerless to affect vitally the ultimate issue or to do more than inflict damage which, compared with the targets offered them, is practically of no significance.

Has our country anything to be ashamed of in the contribution it has thus made to the war for the liberation of civilisation

from the domination of brute force? Assuredly not. And when in the fullness of time the opportunity is offered us for a more striking demonstration of what British world-power means, I am confident that we shall see ample proof that the spirit and temper of our race is as fine as ever, and that we shall play a worthy part in the final overthrow of the common enemy. In the meantime let us make an end of the constant stream of self-depreciation which is far removed from real modesty and self-respect; let us do our part in that stern and silent temper which has for all time been part of our great heritage.

Stern work lies before us; the long-drawn agony is not yet even approaching its close. But we can best help forward the end if we approach our task not with empty boasting, not with perpetual whimperings and self-reproach, but with the cool courage and dogged determination which have carried us so far through the worst dangers that have threatened us in the past, and which, if we play our part without faltering, will yet bring us to a triumphant issue from the perils which beset us to-day.

Chapter Two

Our Invincible Navy

It is the brightest and most encouraging feature of the War that British supremacy at sea is unchallenged and probably unchallengeable by Germany.

It is true that the main German Fleet has not yet dared to give battle in the open sea, and that the endeavours of scattered units afloat have met with speedy disaster. It is no less true that should the “High Canal Admiral” venture forth from the secluded shelters in which the Imperial German Navy has for so many months concealed itself, its prospects of dealing a successful blow at the maritime might of Britain are exceedingly slender.

None the less, it is incredible that, sooner or later, the German Navy will fail to attempt what German writers are fond of describing as a “Hussar Stroke.” We can contemplate that issue – and we know our sailors do so – with every confidence. In every single particular – in ships, in men, in moral, and in traditions – the British Navy is superior to that of Germany. Even without the powerful help we should receive from our French and Italian Allies, British control over the ocean highways is supreme.

A Radical journal, which for years past has been conspicuous for its laudation of everything German, has lately tried to make our flesh creep with tales of the mounting in German warships

of a monster gun – said to be of 17-inch calibre – which was so utterly to outrange anything we possess as to render our control of the North Sea doubtful and shadowy.

It is strange to find a journal which, before the War, was one of the chief asserters of the peaceful intentions of Germany thus passing into the ranks of the “scaremongers.” When the late Lord Roberts ventured, before the War, to point out the dangers which lay before us, he was denounced as an “alarmist.” Yet on the very doubtful supposition that a single shell which fell into Dunkirk was a 17-inch missile the *Daily News* has built up a “scare” article worthy only of a race of panic-mongers, and full of false premisses and false deductions from the first line to the last. Such are the changed views brought about by changed circumstances!

But even supposing that the Germans actually possess a 17-inch naval gun, is the *Daily News* content to assume that the Admiralty and the Government are not fully aware of the fact and that they have taken no steps whatever to meet the new danger? It is a literal fact that we have always been an inch or two ahead of Germany in the calibre of our biggest guns – the history of the Dreadnought fully proves that – and it is incredible that we should suddenly be caught napping in a matter on which we have led the world. I leave out of consideration the purely technical question as to whether such guns could by any possibility be fitted to ships designed and partly constructed to take smaller weapons; experts say that such a change would be impossible without what would amount to practical reconstruction.

Putting these considerations on one side, is the record of our naval service such as to justify us in assuming that they know less than they have always known of the plans and intentions of the enemy?

Mr Balfour's reply on the subject was plain and categorical, the naval authorities know nothing of any such weapon, and do not believe that it exists. In all probability we shall be quite safe in accepting their estimate of the situation, and whatever the facts may be the Navy may be trusted to deal with new perils as they arise. After all, a Navy is not merely so many ships and so many men armed with so many guns of such and such a size. That is a fact which, however imperfectly it is appreciated in Germany, is well known here. Tradition and moral count even more afloat than ashore; we possess both. A Navy whose chief achievements have been the drowning of helpless non-combatants in the infamous submarine campaign may hardly be said to possess either.

For many months now the German flag has vanished from the ocean highways of the world. For many months British commerce has peacefully pursued its pathways to the uttermost ends of the earth.

There have been times when the depredations of German raiders, such as the "Emden," caused some inconvenience and considerable loss. There have been times when the submarine campaign has apparently had a great measure of success. But though many ships, with their cargoes and with many innocent

lives, have been sunk, nothing which the German pirates could do was sufficient seriously to threaten our overseas trade. Very soon the marauders were rounded up and destroyed, and in a space of time which, before the War, would have been deemed incredible the seas were practically free for the passage of the ships of the Allies.

In the early days of the War many good judges believed that the German commerce raiders would have been as effective against our overseas trade as were the French privateers in the days of the Napoleonic wars. Certain it is that it was the universal expectation that our losses in mercantile tonnage would have been far more grievous than has proved to be the case.

We see now that this expectation was unduly alarmist. But it was entertained not merely by amateur students of war, but by many of the sailors who have given a lifetime of thought to the problems of warfare at sea. Every lesson that could be drawn from history suggested that the life of the German raiders would have been far longer than actually proved to be the case. Those lessons, however, were learned in the days when the war fleets were composed of great sailing vessels which could keep the sea far longer without fresh supplies than is possible to-day. Cut off from any possible sources of regular supplies of food, coal, and ammunition, the few German ships which remained at liberty when war broke out were quickly hunted down by superior forces and destroyed until, a very few months after the outbreak of war, Germany's strength afloat was closely confined to the Baltic and

a very small portion of the North Sea.

Nothing like the achievements of the British Navy has ever been witnessed in the history of war. Not even the most enthusiastic believer in sea power could have dreamed of such brilliant and striking successes; not even the most enthusiastic admirer of the British Navy could, in his most sanguine moments, have expected such results as have been attained.

When we come to think of the expanse of ocean to be covered, the services which the British Navy has rendered to civilisation will be seen to be stupendous. Not merely have all the German ships which were at liberty outside the North Sea and the Baltic been hunted down and destroyed, but the Grand Fleet, the darling of the Kaiser's heart, the object upon which millions have been poured out like water with the express purpose of crushing Britain, has been penned up in the narrowest of quarters, and from every strategical point of view has been reduced to practical impotence. True, it succeeded, under cover of fog and darkness, in sending a squadron of fast ships to bombard undefended Scarborough, where its gallant efforts resulted in the killing and wounding of some hundreds of women, children, and other non-combatants who, had we been fighting a civilised foe, would have been perfectly safe from harm. But a repetition of the attempt at this dastardly crime led to such condign punishment that the effort has never been repeated, and from that day to this German excursions at sea, so far, at least, as British waters are concerned, have been confined to the occasional appearance of stray torpedo

craft and the campaign of submarine piracy and murder which has left upon the name of the German Navy a stigma which it will take centuries to eradicate.

With the one solitary exception of the unequal fight off Coronel, where the “Good Hope” and “Monmouth” were destroyed by the greatly superior squadron of Von Spee, the Germans have uniformly had the worse of any sea fighting which they ventured to undertake. Even the Baltic, in which they fondly imagined they had undisputed supremacy, has been rendered more than “unhealthy” by the activities of British submarines – so unhealthy, in fact, that the German attack upon the Gulf of Riga, which was to have led to the crushing of the Russian right wing and the advance upon Petrograd, ended in a dismal failure and the precipitate flight of the attackers. That they will be any more successful in the future is practically unthinkable. Stronger, both relatively and actually, than before the War, the British Navy calmly awaits “the day,” hoping it may soon come, when the Germans will stake their existence upon a last desperate effort to challenge that mastery of the sea the hope of which must be slipping for ever from their grasp.

It is only necessary to say a few words about the atrocious policy of submarine “frightfulness” which culminated in the sinking of the “Lusitania” and the deliberate sacrifice of the lives of some 1,200 innocent people who had nothing whatever to do with the War. That policy, the deluded German people were solemnly assured, was to bring Britain to her knees by

cutting off supplies of food and raw material, and starving her into submission. It is worth noting in this connection that the Germans to-day are calling upon heaven and earth to punish the brutal English for attempting to “starve the German people” by a perfectly legitimate blockade carried out in strict accordance with the rules of international law. We heard nothing of the iniquities of the “starvation” policy as long as the Germans hoped to be able to apply it to us in the same way that they applied it to Paris during the war of 1870-71; it was only when they realised that the submarine policy had failed that they began the desperate series of appeals, directed especially to the United States, that they were being unfairly treated owing to Britain refusing to allow them the “freedom of the seas” – in other words, refusing to sit idly by while Germany obtained from the United States and elsewhere the food and munitions of which she stood, and stands, in such desperate need.

As a matter of fact, the German submarine campaign has not even succeeded in reducing appreciably the strength of the British mercantile marine.

Despite our losses, our mercantile marine is to-day, thanks to new building and purchases, but little weaker than when war broke out, while, so far as we can judge, the submarine campaign has failed to contribute in the slightest degree to the rise in food values which has imposed so great a burden upon large classes of people in our country. It has been in fact, a complete and absolute failure. It has cost us, it is true, many valuable vessels

and many valuable lives, but as a means to ending the War it has achieved practically nothing. The policy of terrifying by murder has prospered no more afloat than it did ashore, while outside the ranks of the combatants it has done nothing but earn for Germany the contempt of the whole civilised world, to bring Germany within an ace of war with the United States, and to brand the German Navy and the entire German nation with an indelible stain of blood and crime.

The submarine policy was a policy which could have been justified only by complete success. It may suit the German Press, led by the nose by the Government, to tell the German people that hated England was being rapidly subdued by the efforts of the “heroic” murderers commanding the German U-boats. We know differently.

We have the authority of Mr Balfour for saying that the German losses in submarines have been “formidable,” and it has been stated – and not contradicted – in the House of Commons that no fewer than fifty of these assassins of the sea have met the fate which their infamy richly deserved. Unofficial estimates have put the number even higher. We shall not know the exact facts until after the War, but we know at least that the German people have at length awakened to an uneasy realisation of the fact that they have murdered in vain, and that they have covered themselves with undying infamy to no real purpose.

I do not suppose that knowledge sits very hardly upon their consciences; but even in Germany there must be people who are

beginning to wonder what judgment the civilised world will pass upon them in the future, and how they are ever to hold up their heads again among civilised nations. And not even a German can remain perpetually indifferent to the judgment of the civilised world.

By every means which ingenuity could devise and daring seamanship could carry into execution Germany's submarines have been chased, harried, and sunk, until, as we are informed upon reliable authority, the chiefs of the German Navy are finding it increasingly difficult to find and train submarine crews. And small wonder! No one questions the bravery of the German sailor, whatever we may think of his humanity. But, also, he is human, and not the superhuman being which the Germans imagine themselves to be. And when he sees, week after week and month after month, submarine after submarine venturing forth into the waters of the North Sea only to be mysteriously swallowed up in the void, one can understand that he shrinks appalled from a prospect sufficient to shake the nerves of men who, whatever their other qualities may be, have not been bred for hundreds of years to the traditions and the dangers of the sea. Small wonder that they quail from the unknown fate which for ever threatens them! Many sally forth never to return; others, more fortunate, on reaching home have a tale to tell which, losing nothing in the telling, is not of a nature to encourage their fellows.

It is said that a single voyage in a German submarine is enough so seriously to try the nerves of officers and men that they need

a prolonged rest before they are ready to resume their duties. Imagine the conditions under which they live! Hunted day and night by the relentless British destroyers, faced ever by strange and unfamiliar perils and by traps of which they know nothing, it is hardly a matter of surprise if their nerves give way.

The War has given us the most wonderful example the world has ever seen of what sea power means. Thanks to their undisputed command of the ocean, the Allies have been able to carry on operations in widely separated theatres practically free from any of the difficulties which would certainly have proved insurmountable in the presence of strong hostile forces afloat. We and our Allies have been able to transport men and munitions wherever we wished without serious hindrance, and even in the presence of hostile submarines we have only lost two or three transports in eighteen months of war. That, it must be admitted, is a very wonderful record.

Even the tragic blunder of the Dardanelles gave us a striking instance of what sea power can effect. We were able, thanks to the Navy, not merely to land huge forces in the face of the enemy, but we were able also to re-embark them without loss under circumstances which, by all the laws of war, should have meant an appalling list of casualties. There can be no doubt whatever that had the re-embarking troops on the Gallipoli Peninsula tried to reach their ships without having firm command of the sea, not more than a very small percentage of them would have survived.

In considering the bearings of naval power to the great struggle as a whole, we must always keep in mind what the Germans expected and hoped when they declared war. We know, of course, that they did not expect Britain to enter the War. But at the same time they must have realised that there was a possibility of our doing so, and they had formulated a plan of campaign to meet such a contingency. We know pretty well what that campaign was. The German theory has been put into practice since; unfortunately for the Germans, it has not worked out quite in accordance with the text-books. They declared for the "war of attrition"; their idea was that, by submarine attacks, the British Fleet could be so whittled down that at length the German main Fleet would be able to meet it with reasonable prospects of success. Their Fleet, while the process of attrition was going on, was to remain sheltered in the unreachable fastnesses of the Kiel Canal. The latter, however, is the only part of the German programme which has gone according to the book.

The "High Canal Fleet" remains in the "last ditch," and apparently, at the time of writing, seems likely to remain there. But the process of attrition has not made the progress the Germans hoped for. It is true we have lost a number of ships through submarine attacks. But it will not be overlooked by the Germans any more than by ourselves that the greater part of our losses was sustained in the early days of the submarine campaign. As soon as the Navy "got busy" with the submarine pest our losses practically ceased, and it is now a long time since we

have lost a fighting unit through torpedo attack. As is usual with the Navy, our men set themselves to grapple with unfamiliar conditions, and their success has been very striking. Not only have they been able to protect themselves against submarine attack, but they have made the home seas, at any rate, too hot to hold the pirates, dozens of which have been destroyed or captured. And when the submarine war was transferred to the Mediterranean it was not very long before the Navy again had the menace well in hand. In the meantime our building programme was pushed forward at such a rate that a very large number of ships of the most powerful class have been added to the fighting units of the Fleet, with the result that not merely relatively to the Fleet of Germany, but actually in point of ships, men, and guns, our Fleet to-day is stronger than it was when war broke out. That, again, is an achievement wholly without parallel. And it is one of the chief factors in considering the future of the campaign. The Germans have never been able to rival us in speed of construction even in times of peace; it is in the last degree unlikely that they have been able to do so under the conditions that have prevailed during the past eighteen months. I have not the least doubt that we are fully justified in assuming that our final victory at sea is assured – if, indeed, it is not practically won already. The conditions are plain for everyone, both at home and abroad, to see for himself, and we have plenty of evidence to suggest that they are fully appreciated in Germany; the idle quays of Hamburg, the idle fleets of German merchant ships

rotting in the shelter of neutral ports, the peaceful progress of the ships of the Allies over the seas of the world, and the growing stringency of conditions in Germany brought about by the British blockade are quite sufficient evidence for those Germans – and their number is growing – who are no longer blinded by the national megalomania.

Our Navy is a silent service; it would perhaps be better for us if at times it were a little more vocal. For there is no disguising the fact that there is a body of impatient grumblers at home who, because we do not read of a great sea victory every morning with our breakfasts, are apt to ask what the Navy is doing. We can be quite sure that that question is not asked in Germany. There, at any rate, the answer is plain.

We can discount, I am sure, the tales we hear of Germany starving, and that the horrors of Paris in 1870 are being repeated. That story is no doubt diligently spread abroad by the Germans themselves in the hope of appealing to the sentiment, or rather the sentimentality, of certain classes in the neutral nations. At the same time, we cannot shut our eyes to the growing mass of evidence which goes to show that the stringency of the British blockade is producing a great and increasing effect throughout Germany. To begin with, her export trade, despite the leaks in the blockade, has practically vanished, and it must be remembered that modern Germany is the creation of trade with overseas countries. She grew rich on commerce; she might have grown richer if she had been content with the opportunities which were

as fully open to her as to the rest of the world. It is due to the steady strangling process carried out by the British Navy that her long accumulation of wealth has been decisively checked, and that she is dissipating that accumulation in what is inevitably bound to be a sure, if slow, bleeding to death. And, whatever may be the course of the War, Germany's overseas trade can be resumed only by the permission or through the destruction of the British Navy. That is a factor of supreme and tremendous importance.

In the British blockade – in other words, in the British Fleet – we have the factor which in the long run must make possible the final overthrow of Germany. I am not suggesting that we can win this war by sea power alone; the final crash must come through the defeat of Germany's land forces, since she is a land and not a sea Power. But it is the operation of sea power which must make the final blow possible. Sea power, and sea power alone, will make possible the final blockade of Germany by land as well as by sea. The ring of the blockade already is nearly complete; and when the British and French, advancing from the base at Salonica, link up, as they must sooner or later, with the Russian forces coming south across the Balkans, Germany will be held in a ring of iron from which she will have no means of escape.

She realises fully that she has not the remotest chance of breaking through the lines of the Allies in the West; she has failed utterly to break the Russian line in the East. It is vital for her to break the ring by which she is nearly surrounded, and in this

fact we have the explanation of her dash across the Balkans. So far that dash has been attended with a great measure of success owing to the failure of the Allies to win the active support of Greece, Rumania, and Bulgaria. She has succeeded in crushing Serbia and Montenegro, and in linking up with her Turkish Allies through the medium of the Constantinople railway. But Salonica, firmly held by the Allies, must ever be a thorn in the side of her progress to the East, and until she succeeds in reducing it her flank is open to a blow which would shatter her prospects in the East as decisively as they have already been shattered in the West. We cannot imagine that the Allies have gone to Salonica solely for reasons of their health, and it needs no great acquaintance with military history to realise that the possession by the Allies of the Salonica lines may be as fatal to Germany as the holding of the lines of Torres Vedras by Wellington was fatal to the plans of Napoleon.

The analogy is not exact – analogies seldom are – but “the Spanish ulcer” is sufficiently reproduced for practical purposes. German commanders in the East can never feel safe so long as Salonica remains in our possession. And I have no doubt that when the time is ripe we shall see the Allies advancing through the Balkans to join hands with the Russians and, it may be, with the Rumanians. Then Germany will be definitely isolated, and the process of exhaustion, already considerably advanced, will proceed with ever-growing momentum, until it reaches the point when a combined attack on land by the whole of the Allies

simultaneously will prove irresistible. I am not one of those who believe that Germany can be defeated by economic pressure alone. But it cannot be denied that economic pressure offers the greatest means of so weakening her power of resistance that her final military defeat will be rendered immeasurably easier.

And we must always remember – there is too strong a tendency in certain quarters to forget it – that it is the principal duty of the British Navy, so long as the German Fleet prefers idleness to fighting, to bring about the reduction of the German power of resistance by a remorseless strangulation of her trade. Our policy in this respect is perfectly definite. It is that, paying due regard to the undoubted rights of neutral nations, we will allow nothing to reach Germany which will assist to prolong her powers of resistance.

There has been a strong disposition in some quarters to represent the British Navy as fighting with one hand tied behind its back owing to the supposed apathy or worse of the Foreign Office. Sir Edward Grey, in perhaps the greatest speech of his long career, has sufficiently disposed of that charge. It is not denied that from a variety of causes, some of them at least beyond our control, Germany has obtained supplies which we would very gladly have denied to her. But, unfortunately for us and fortunately for her, neutral nations have their rights, which we are bound to respect unless we wish to make fresh enemies. It is beyond doubt that supplies are leaking into Germany through Holland and Scandinavia which we should be glad to keep out. It

is absolutely impossible to prove enemy destination in all these cases, and it must be remembered that unless we can prove this we have no right to interfere with the commerce of neutral nations, who are quite entitled, if they can do so, to supply Germany with precisely the class of goods which the United States is supplying to us.

We are too apt to overlook the fact that there is nothing criminal in supplying guns and ammunition to Germany. Neutral nations are free to do so – if they can. We are entitled to stop them – also if we can. But we are not entitled to interfere with the legitimate commerce of a neutral nation; in other words, we must prove that contraband is intended for the use of the enemy before we can lay hands upon it.

It is this feature of international law which makes it so difficult for us to declare an absolute blockade of Germany. And it is just this aspect of the case which is the justification of the trade agreements of the kind which has been concluded with Denmark. Under that agreement, and under similar ones, we allow certain goods to be imported in normal volume to neutral countries under the assurance that they will not be re-exported to Germany. The agreement with Denmark has been violently attacked, and attacked, as everyone admits who has seen it, without the slightest justification. It is admitted that it does not give us all we would like to have; but, on the other hand, it is also admitted by those who have seen it that it gives us a good deal more than we could hope to obtain by other means short of what

would be practically a declaration of war.

And even the hotheads among us would shrink from telling either Holland or the Scandinavian countries that unless they surrender their rights and do as we wish, we should at once declare war upon them or practically force them to declare war upon us. We need have no shadow of doubt what Germany would do if she wielded the power we do. She would show, as she has shown, scant consideration for the rights of neutrals. But, thank heaven! we are not Germany, and we fight with clean hands.

We have to solve the problem of making our blockade as effectual as possible while paying scrupulous regard to the rights of others. That problem is in process of solution; the importation of commodities into Germany is decreasing day by day; and if we are not at the end of our difficulties in this respect, we are at least drawing into sight of the achievement of our purpose. And the more fully that purpose can be attained, the nearer draws the end of the great struggle and the emancipation of the civilised world from the dominion of brute force.

Chapter Three

The Coming Victory on Land

No one in these days would seek to minimise the untold advantages which sea power confers upon those who wield it.

But to say that England, supreme at sea, could conquer Germany while the latter was undefeated on land would be to stretch the doctrine of sea power very far beyond what is actually within the bounds of possibility. Very few people to-day hold the doctrines of sea power which were current coin only a few months ago. That without sea power Germany could win a decisive victory over England is admittedly impossible.

Without sea power greater than our own she can neither destroy our trade nor attempt an invasion of England with any prospect of success. In the presence of the British Fleet any attempt to land on these shores sufficient forces to act with decisive effect would be impossible. For such an undertaking Germany must secure command of the narrow seas, even though it might be for only a few days or even a few hours.

Under existing conditions her sole chance of doing this would be to decoy our Fleet away from our home waters by a desperate dash of her own squadrons, trusting to be able to carry out a surprise landing on our shores in the interval – necessarily brief – in which she could hope to operate undisturbed. That menace,

however, is one to which the chiefs of our Navy are fully awake, and it is indeed a forlorn hope.

Imagine Germany successful on land. Could we defeat her through our undisputed command of the sea? Personally I do not believe we could. In all probability she could under such circumstances obtain the supplies which would render her self-supporting, while at the same time doing a great trade with neutral nations or with her former antagonists over the land routes which we could not command.

It is for this reason that the situation calls for the exercise of military power on the part of Britain on a scale never dreamed of in previous years.

We may, I think, take it for granted that without the military as well as the naval assistance of Great Britain our Allies would have very little prospect of bringing the War to a successful conclusion. It is the military power of England, growing gradually day by day, which in the end must turn the scale if the scale is to be turned. It is true we have rendered to our Allies very much more than the measure of support which we promised them when we joined them to combat the peril which threatened all in common. We have rendered the seas safe; we have already given assistance on land perhaps far beyond anything they either expected or had the right to ask. Naturally, we make no special virtue of this; the fight is one of self-preservation for ourselves just as it is for France, Russia, and Italy. We all share a common peril; all of us in common owe to

the others the fullest mutual co-operation and effort.

And upon us, just as much as upon our Allies, rests the duty of developing our fighting efficiency to the highest pitch of which the Empire is capable. Nothing less than this will be sufficient to remove for all time the menace by which civilisation is faced. Those who say that because Britain has gone beyond what she undertook to do it cannot be expected that she should do more are nothing less than traitors to the common cause. We cannot bargain with our destiny. And, assuredly, if we fail to measure the gravity of the situation, if we fail to put forth the whole energies of our people, destiny will take a terrible revenge. Can it be, with the awful lessons of Belgium and Serbia before our eyes, that this nation will be satisfied with anything less than the maximum of effort in the prosecution of the War?

Cost what it may, the final overthrow of Germany must be effected *on land*, and in the execution of that inflexible purpose Britain, whether she likes it or not, must play a leading part. We have been for centuries a great naval Power; the day has dawned when we must become a great military Power as well. We have, indeed, already become so in part. We have raised armies on a scale which, before the War, neither our friends nor our enemies would have thought possible. Without unduly flattering ourselves, we may claim to have done much; we shall yet do more and more until the power of Prussia is finally broken. It is not enough that we should content ourselves, as some suggest, with supplying money and munitions to our Allies.

We must take the field as a nation fighting for everything which makes life worth living. To those who say that we cannot afford to raise larger armies than we have already raised, I would reply that if necessary the last of Britain's savings, the whole strength of her manhood, must be flung into the melting-pot of war. And I am happy to think that at length the nation as a whole is showing a growing realisation of this undoubted fact. We are fast getting over our preliminary troubles (which have lasted far too long); the entire nation is settling down in grim and deadly earnest to make an end once and for all of the German pretensions. "Tear-'em is a good dog, but Holdfast is better," says the old saw, and we are to-day not far from the time when, not for the first time in the world's history, the silent, deadly, dogged determination of the British race will be a fact with which the entire world will have to reckon. We are out to fight this War to a finish, and I am glad to think the nation as a whole has at last awakened to the grim facts of the situation.

Those who are suggesting that the British Navy can by any means give the death-blow to German aim at world-domination are, I am convinced, doing the nation ill service. Their argument is that because we are a naval Power we should be content with the exercise of our naval strength, and should not venture to embark on military operations on a scale for which our previous experience has not tended to fit us. Counsels of this kind, however well intended, are a profound – they might well be a fatal – mistake. They tend to deaden the brain and paralyse the arm

of the Executive; they add to the terrible perils by which we are already surrounded. More than this, they tend greatly to prolong the conflict and add immeasurably to the terrible toll of life and treasure which the War is extorting from all the nations who have the misfortune to be engaged in it. Let us put aside once and for all the comfortable theory that as we have already done more than was expected of us there is no need for further exertions.

There is a crying need for all that we can do, for more, indeed, than we can hope to do.

To be sparing of effort in war is to be guilty of the greatest possible folly. Moderation in war, as Lord Fisher is credited with saying, is imbecility; and it is infinitely cheaper in the long run to do a thing well than to half do it and, probably, have all the work to do over again under still more difficult circumstances, even if it can be done at all. A glance at the record of the Dardanelles Expedition will show what I mean.

And unless in this hour of supreme trial Britain is true to herself and to the great cause for which she and her Allies have unsheathed the sword, if she is content with less than the utmost effort of which she is capable, the historian of the future, looking backward across the centuries, will be able to place his finger unerringly upon the day and hour of which it will be possible to say, "Here the decline of the British Empire began." Happily, indeed, for ourselves and civilisation at large the awakening spirit of our people is the best possible guarantee against any such disaster.

As I said in my opening chapter, our mythical visitor from another planet, judging the progress of the War by the map only, might well be excused if he came to the conclusion that the Germans had already won so far as the land campaign was concerned. Now this is precisely the mental position of the German people to-day. They have been told, day by day and month by month, that Germany is everywhere victorious, and, speaking generally, they believe it. Of course, a few of the more thoughtful and better informed are beginning to wonder why, if the constant tales of victory are true, they seem to be no nearer to the sight of peace. But the German Government has to deal not with the well-informed few, but with the ill-informed many.

So long as the mass of the people are prepared to believe what they are told, they will go on supplying the Government with the means of war, and, after all, that is no bad frame of mind for the conduct of a great struggle.

No doubt the process of disillusionment, when it comes, will be all the more violent and painful, but at present we have to face the fact that a very large proportion of the German people believe that they are winning. Up to recently they have shown that they are willing to put up with the shortage and distress which are growing in Germany, looking upon them as part of the price of victory. But, as I shall show later, even this comfortable belief is beginning to break down before the stern logic of facts, and, as a result, chinks and cracks are appearing even in the iron wall of German patience and perseverance. That those chinks and cracks

will widen as time goes on is certain; and when the wall gives way, as it assuredly will, we shall see a catastrophe which will probably sweep away the German organisation as it exists to-day.

Now let us consider for a moment the grounds upon which Germany assumes she has won the War. She regards the whole field of the War on land as absolutely dominated by the German arms. German armies have occupied practically the whole of Belgium, they have pushed their way far into France, they have occupied the whole of Poland and a considerable slice of Russia proper, they have overrun and devastated Serbia and Montenegro, have won control of the Balkans, and have opened up an uninterrupted way to Constantinople and the East. But – and it is a very big “but” indeed – their one complete military success in the real sense of the word has been the destruction of the fighting power of Montenegro, the smallest and the weakest of their opponents! Not even Serbia, properly speaking, has been destroyed as a fighting force, for at least half of the splendid Serbian Army is intact, and will take the field again as soon as it has rested and secured fresh equipment.

As regards Germany's more powerful opponents, the only ones which count so far as the final decision of the War is concerned, they stand to-day not merely with their fighting efficiency unimpaired, but, taken as a whole, actually stronger than they were a year ago. The huge armies which Britain is raising have not yet even taken the field; France is certainly no more weakened relatively than is Germany herself; Russia,

recovering amazingly from her misfortunes, will soon be ready to strike new and harder blows; Italy is steadily, if slowly, pushing forward to the heart of her hereditary enemy. Moreover, all are absolutely united and determined in the prosecution of the War.

Yet in the face of these indisputable facts the Germans appear to be genuinely surprised that the Allies are not ready and willing to accept the preposterous "peace terms" which, in their arrogance, they have been good enough to put forward, through the usual "unofficial" channels, for acceptance. It is a surprise to them that the Allies are not ready to confess that they are vanquished. The fact is, of course, that they are not vanquished or anything like it. They mean to go on, as Mr Asquith has said, until the military power of Prussia, the *fons et origo* of the whole bloody struggle, is finally and completely destroyed. And they have the means and the will to do it. The fact that Germany has forced her way into so large an amount of the Allied territory is merely, in the eyes of the Allies, another reason why they should continue to fight, and a good reason why they should fight with growing hopes of ultimate success.

Longer lines necessarily mean thinner lines, for the simple reason that Germany has reused her maximum of man-power, while the Allies have still large reserves as yet untouched.

There we have the bedrock fact of the War, and no amount of boasting and bragging of German "victories" will alter it. It signifies little or nothing that Germany shall have overrun the Balkans so long as she is open to a smashing blow in the West,

which is, and must ever be to the end, the real heart of the War. It is in France and Flanders that the final blow must come, and it will profit Germany nothing to hold Constantinople while the Allies are thundering at the crossing of the Rhine.

If Germany had succeeded in her ambitious design to capture Paris or London or Petrograd, she might have reasonable excuse for some of the boasting which has filled the columns of her Press; she would have still more excuse if she had succeeded in destroying the armed forces of Britain or of France or of Russia. But she has done none of these things. Britain, France, Russia, and Italy are not merely still full of fight, they are growing stronger while she is growing weaker. They are certainly not weakening as much as she is herself in the moral sense and in the capacity and determination to endure to the end. And while I am no believer in the theory that a war can be won by sitting down and waiting for exhaustion to defeat the enemy, there can be no doubt of the fact that if the War resolves itself into a contest of endurance the Allies are at least as well equipped as the Germans to see this thing through to the end.

We must never lose sight of the fact that the German thrust to the East is merely an expression of her uncomfortable consciousness that it is her last chance of breaking the blockade by land as well as by sea which is exercising such a strangling effect upon her. Germany, as a fact, is in the position of a beleaguered garrison. Unless she can break the ring around her she must inevitably perish. If we bear this fact in mind, we shall

be in a better position to appreciate at its real value the bearing of the German successes in the direction of Constantinople, and of her real motives in that adventure. So far Germany is closely blockaded on three fronts – by the French and British, by the Italians, and by the Russians. She can have no reasonable hope that she will be able to break the blockade in either of these directions; her efforts have already brought her disastrous failures and enormous losses. By her success in the Balkans she has opened, for what they are worth, fresh sources of supplies; she has secured, again for what it is worth, the adhesion of Bulgaria; she has secured the neutrality of Greece, and, so far, of Rumania. But she is not yet safe even here. Salonica menaces her communications eastwards; and should the Allies take the offensive from this base, we ought to see the last of Germany's communications with the outer world, except through the neutral countries, finally closed. Then, and then only, will the full influence of the sea power of the Allies begin to make itself felt with decisive results.

The plain fact is that those who have decried the supposed inactivity of the British Fleet have failed to take into consideration the fact that the German successes on land have, to some extent, neutralised British successes afloat. Germany had every reason to hope that our failure in the Gallipoli Peninsula would enable her to call upon the services of some half a million Turks and to secure fresh sources of supplies of food and raw material, not very great, perhaps, but still helpful; and in Serbia

she has won what is of real value, a fresh supply of copper. If she could push through a really serviceable system of communication with Bagdad and the Persian Gulf, she would gain still more solid advantages, including, it might be, control of the British oil supplies in Persia. But this hope has been utterly smashed by the great Russian victory at Erzerum. I do not believe the German aims in these directions were immediate perils, but the Germans, as we know to our cost, take long views in matters of war, and the better we understand their aims the better will be our chance of countering them. And in this case a full understanding of what Germany is aiming at provides us with a specially urgent reason for decisive action at the point where Germany can be hit the hardest. This is unquestionably on the West front.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.