TREITSCHKE
AND THE GREAT WAR

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PREFACE

THE conduct of the German nation during the present war must be judged by the preliminary incidents and the brutality which marked the opening months of the war. In spite of a highly organised system of mendacity and misrepresentation, the truth has reached the ears of the civilised world, and some restraint has been imposed upon the German troops. We must, therefore, regard their conduct in the first months as the conduct they deliberately adopted. Their actions have been a sinister revelation to the nations of the world. There seems to have been an outpouring from the pit, and the problem for thoughtful people in every nation is how this

morbid temper has got into the German nature.

Many people are misled by the word "culture," which has been associated with the German proceedings. What the Germans call *Kultur* is by no means the same thing as what English people call culture. It means civilisation. It means the whole system of social, political and commercial life; the schools, the parliamentary system, the industrial life, the technical skill, the military system, and everything which distinguishes the civilised man from the savage. The fact that various scholars of Germany seem to have approved the conduct of the war probably gives some colour to the general misunderstanding, yet how anyone could suppose that religious thinkers like Harnack and Eucken could approve the horrible outrages that have desecrated the soil of Belgium one cannot

understand. The censorship in Germany is far more rigorous even than in England, and one may well suppose that these outrages are entirely unknown to the leading thinkers. Yet it is a fact that some of Germany's leading scholars have approved the violation of the neutrality of Belgium, and it is well known how German military policy prescribes the treatment of a conquered country if there be any resistance.

There is some taint in the blood or the brain of one of the greatest Powers of the modern world. It is, therefore, of interest to inquire whether there are any elements in German culture which indirectly might lead to or palliate such brutalities. Everybody now knows the sentiments of military writers like General von Bernhardi. With his name is associated, as the second apostle of the German modern gospel, the name

of a distinguished historian, Heinrich von Treitschke.

To understand what is called "the soul of the German people," one of the most familiar phrases in German literature, the history of Germany must be borne in mind. The progress that has been made by the German people in the last one hundred years has few parallels in history. Prussia emerged from the Napoleonic war a small and deeply shattered State. Within the hundred years since the final victory at Waterloo, it has gathered province after province, and to-day it commands one of the most powerful and—we thought yesterday—most enlightened nations of the modern world. Germany is naturally proud of its great success. Nor must we suppose that this success has been purely military. How many times in recent years have not our magazines assured us

of the superiority of German education, German commercial enterprise, German technical skill? The serious problem is not to explain the pride of the German people, but to understand how these achievements are squared with the horrible outrages which apparently find little restraint in higher quarters in Germany.

Treitschke was one of the most popular historians of modern Germany. Of a very poetic and romantic nature, he impressed the story of his country upon crowds of youths in the greatest German University with a fire and eloquence of which we find few examples amongst modern historians. Although a Czech by extraction, his nature responded ardently to the features of modern German history, and he became the most influential teacher in the country. Prussia was to him almost a sacred Power. The Reformation had

inaugurated a new period in the life of Europe, and Prussia was its great interpreter. Beginning life as a Liberal, his sympathy with Bismarck and the Prussian Government converted him into a Conservative of the most obstinate character. He almost deified the ways and traditions of the Hohenzollerns.

In person also, Treitschke was eminently fitted to be the apostle of Bismarckism. As a young man, although a brilliant student, he was sent down from his university for duelling and constant disturbance. Accident prevented him from becoming a soldier, and he carried all the ardour of a soldier into the interpretation of history. Like Goethe he wavered long between poetry and action, and he ended by infusing poetic fire into a gospel of drastic action. No demand could be made by the State, however exacting, but Treitschke

religiously impressed it on the youth of Germany. He was a politician in the widest sense of the word, as well as an historian. The whole of history, in his mind, encouraged the development of the German Empire along the line on which it had entered. He glorified war as few historians have ever done, and he laid down principles the action of which we can plainly detect in the most recent ambitions of Germany. How these principles were seized by military writers, how Treitschke's sometimes reluctant concessions to the hard traditions of Prussia were made to serve the purpose of the more corrupt elements in German life, is one of the most interesting studies in connection with the German character. To him we can trace a very large part of the abnormally swollen idea which young Germany has of its position and its future, and there are few points in the more repulsive

military gospel which cannot find shelter in some of the pages of Treitschke.

He, more than any, infused into German students—the generation which is fighting against us to-day—a jealousy and disdain of England. He, more than any, gave a high-sounding moral and religious character to the military ambitions of Germany. He lived through the making of the German Empire, and, in impressing that story on the mind of a new generation, he created the ambition which has led undoubtedly to the present confusion in Europe. How his character developed these dangerous tendencies, and what were the doctrines which he expounded in the class-rooms of the Berlin University, or the Hall of the Reichstag, or the higher Press of his country, I propose to explain.

J. M.

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CHAPTER I

THE IDEAS AND INFLUENCE OF TREITSCHKE

TREITSCHKE

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The Ideas and Influence of Treitschke

Heinrich von Treitschke was born at Dresden on September 15th, 1834. His father was an officer, and eventually a General, of the Saxon army; a man related to the Saxon nobility, but, not very many generations back, tracing his descent from Czech ancestors. His admiring biographer, Hausrath, traces those features of his nature which made him such a power in Germany precisely to his foreign ancestry. Nietzsche, who is regarded by many as another great influence in the

making of Germany, was a Pole. Treitschke, also, was by origin a Slav. But the whole environment of his early years gave a bent to his mind. His father had fought in the later years of the Napoleonic war; his mother was the daughter of an officer. In the natural course of things he would assuredly have become a soldier, but an accident in his early years gave a different turn to his career.

Talleyrand had his whole career perverted by an accident which lamed him when he was a child. In 1842 young Treitschke had smallpox, and it left him with a serious disorder of the ears, which in time turned into complete deafness. This closed the military world against him, and he threw his whole energy into learning. By the age of ten he knew Latin thoroughly and Greek very fairly. The military sentiment mingled with the books he read. He liked nothing better

than to wrap himself in his father's military cloak and play the soldier. His great hero, shining beyond the heroes of Homer, was Blücher.

He was a strong, wild boy, with little affection for his mother and an ardent attachment to his father, whom he constantly accompanied to the camp. Letters written to his father in his fourteenth year show that he was deeply interested in politics even at that early age. His schoolmaster, moreover, was a vigorous Pan-German. Treitschke's readings about ancient Rome and Greece gave him a boyish leaning to republicanism, but he soon outgrew that bias and looked upon the revolutionary disturbances of 1848 with youthful disfavour; by his seventeenth year he was already an ardent believer in the union of Germany under Prussia.

At that time, in 1848, the German subjects

of Denmark were rebelling in Schleswig and Holstein, and he followed the accounts in the papers with deep interest. He wrote a fiery poem on the "heroes" who fell in the rebellion. He called upon Germany to "wipe out the wild shame with the wild sword of the avenger," and the juvenile poem ended:

> "Break, ye waves, break wildly on our advancing keel,
> Yet we will sail still onward, and we will reach the goal."

With these sentiments Treitschke went to Bonn University in the spring of 1851. He had already a keen eye for the division of Germany into little States, separated by tariff walls, as his letters to his father showed. In a vague, youthful way his idea of Germany had already dawned. At Bonn he applied himself chiefly to the study of history and of the *Politics* of Aristotle. Years afterwards he said to his students: "The man who

would have a sound political sense must steel himself in the steel-bath of classical antiquity, which produced the greatest master-piece of theoretical politics—the *Politics* of Aristotle."

His deafness again influenced his career. For a time he strained his ears to follow the instruction of the professors, but he had little success, and he resigned himself to hard solitary reading and long solitary walks. For the ordinary frivolities of student life he had little taste. He was a stern, very religious young man; by no means anæmic. His broad shoulders, his penetrating dark eyes and black hair, revealed the great energy of his nature. His reading was exceedingly varied, and always turned upon the conception of a State. He read English lawyers like Blackstone, and his favourites ranged from Machiavelli to Shakespeare. His chief professor,

Dahlmann, represented the Reformation as the starting point of a new civilisation, in which Prussia was to take the lead. This idea sank deep into the serious mind of young Treitschke. He wrote to his father, "The greatest thing of all is the fulfilment of duty," and he still followed the confused political development of Germany with remarkable intelligence for so young a man. In spite of his father belonging to one of the small German States, Treitschke was early convinced that they must be either persuaded or compelled to pass under the leadership of Prussia.

By this time he had intelligently grasped the history and the situation of Germany. The kingdom which Frederick the Great had so ably established had been ground under the heel of Napoleon. At the Council of Vienna, in 1815, the ambitions of the German statesmen were checked by Talleyrand and

the English representatives, so that the Kingdom of Frederick was not wholly restored. The rest of Germany was linked with Prussia in a Confederation which proved itself an almost lifeless and helpless mass of petty States under the reactionary influence of Austria. This conflicted violently with the recent movement in German literature. Goethe and Schiller and Herder, and all the brilliant writers of the beginning of the 19th century, had called for a rebirth of the German spirit. For more than a hundred years Germany had shown signs of exhaustion. In letters it could do little more than imitate the French, but in the latter part of the 18th century a great German literature had arisen, and the strong patriotic sentiment which this literature inspired made young men deeply impatient of the actual helplessness of the country. Prussia seemed at first to Treitschke

to share this helplessness. It had at first supported the claim of the Duke of Augustenburg to Schleswig and Holstein, and had retired under the pressure of England and Russia. The cry of " weakness " and national shame was raised throughout young Germany. This was renewed when, in 1852, the Treaty of London guaranteed the integrity of Denmark. During the same year a national parliament was at work in Germany trying to reorganise the Confederation. The country was split into two parties; some were for a big Germany, including Austria, others for the exclusion of Austria and the welding of all the small States into a Kingdom under the lead of Prussia. They even offered the title of Emperor to Frederick William IV., but that autocrat would receive no gift from the hand of a democratic parliament. Thus every attempt of Germany to assert its strength

and its mighty resources ended in failure, and the Powers of Europe paid little heed to the demands of Germany in their counsels.

Treitschke's industrious reading and fiery thinking were accompanied by an acute interest in these domestic problems. In 1852 he went to study at Leipzig. Here again he found himself unable to follow the professors, and spent his days and nights in hard solitary reading. He was comprehensive in his taste. French novels mingled with the volumes of Hume and Adam Smith and Ricardo on his desk, but everything which he read went in his mind to the building up of a great idea of a State, and that State was to be Prussia. For the time being he despised Prussia, and his feelings, as reflected in his letters, were almost aimless and discontented. In 1854 he passed on to Tübingen, and then to Heidelberg University, where he continued to

unite a deep study of economics and history with the writing of patriotic poems. In 1855 he was dismissed from Heidelberg University because of his constant challenges to dangerous duels with pistols.

A letter, written to his father in March, 1856, when he was studying at Goettingen, gives us a remarkable illustration of his development. He had, at an earlier date, studied Machiavelli, and it is clear that that unscrupulous theorist had made a lasting impression on his mind. He says to his father, referring to Machiavelli: "He was assuredly a practical statesman better fitted than any other, to destroy the illusion that the world can be reformed by cannon loaded only with *ideas* of right and truth. Even the politic of this much-decried apologist for crude force, seems to me adapted to the present condition of Prussia. It sacrifices right and

virtue to a great idea—the might and unity of its people: which cannot be said of the party that at present controls Prussia. This fundamental idea of the work—the glowing patriotism, and the conviction that even the most oppressive despotism must be welcomed when it makes for the might and unity of the Fatherland—have reconciled me to many perverse and repulsive views of the great Florentine."

It is almost humorous to find, that, when his father about the same date scolded him for his religious liberalism, he replied that he honoured Christianity above all religions in the world as "The Gospel of Love."

Treitschke still hesitated between poetry and science. Year after year he polished the verses he had written in his 'teens, and at length, in 1856, he published them. The art is not impressive, but one finds running

through the whole volume a feeling of burning shame for the lowliness of Germany in the concert of Europe, and a stern conviction that she must attain power and greatness by hard work and sacrifice. At the same time he wrote an article in the Prussian Year Book on "The Foundations of English Liberty," and we are told that it was attributed to Mommsen. In 1857 he returned to Leipzig and wrote his thesis on "The Science of Society." The whole work is a plea for the broader development of political economy, and the dream of German unity breaks in continually. It closed with the words of Shakespeare:

> "There is a mystery, with whom relation
> Dare not meddle, in the soul of State,
> Which hath an operation more Divine
> Than breath or pen can give expression to."

He began to teach in the year 1859. His

subject was "The History of Political Theories," and it is significant that we find his father warning him that he is being watched. Although he was teaching in one of the small German States, Saxony, he freely expounded his ideal of a United Germany. The rumour of a secret alliance between France and Russia for the destruction of Germany, which was current at that time, greatly alarmed him and he turned again to Prussia. He said in one of his letters: "That Germany will win in the end I do not doubt for a moment: otherwise there is no God in Heaven." He saw enemies of Germany on every frontier. Russia he despised. England he regarded, in spite of his admiration of Milton and Shakespeare, as thwarting the development of Germany. Austria he described as "the hereditary enemy of German Unity." War seemed to him inevitable, and

out of the crucible of war he believed a stronger and purified Germany would emerge. "Germany," he said, "will bleed again, as it did two hundred years ago, for the freedom of the whole world."

Both his letters and his lectures reflect the terrible passions of the year 1859 in Germany. His hearers in the University increased monthly in numbers, and he took up the subject of the history of Prussia, in spite of his father's warning. In a letter of February 10th, 1861, he says that he is going to write a "History of the German Confederation," which will convince all of the need to "destroy the small States." His correspondence with his father—a high official in the most reluctant of these small States—became more and more troubled, and he was compelled to leave Leipzig. "To change my conviction out of love of you I am unable,"

he said to his father. He went to Munich and began to write his history of the Confederation. His letters constantly complain that there is no *power* in small States. "Germany," he says, "needs an Emperor to teach it freedom." He was still a Liberal in regard to internal politics, and in 1863 he wrote an appreciative article on "Lord Byron and Radicalism," and lectured on the History of England.

The sentiments which Treitschke openly expressed both in his university lectures and on many public occasions, brought increasing animosity upon him. In that year, 1863, there was a great meeting of 20,000 athletes at Leipzig, and Treitschke was invited to address them. The vast audience raised his patriotism to the whitest heat, and the innocent gathering was astounded to hear from the platform a glowing demand for the unity

of Germany. The speech was afterwards printed, and had a large circulation in Saxony. The Saxon authorities, regarding with great distrust the plea of unity, and leaning towards Austria as some protection against what they described as the ambition of Prussia, watched Treitschke with anxiety. The agitation became worse when, in the same year 1863, the trouble about Schleswig and Holstein was renewed. Frederick VII. of Denmark had died, and the Prince of Augustenburg had renewed his claim to the Duchies. The Nationalist party in Germany warmly supported him, and Treitschke's eloquence was enlisted on his behalf; indeed, modest as his salary was, and little as he could expect from his father in such a cause, he made a large contribution to the military funds of the Duke's campaign. At that time he still regarded Prussia with great distrust, but before many

months he was entirely converted to the Prussian cause.

Bismarck had taken power in 1862. Treitschke had been calling for "a heart glowing with great passion, a brain cold and clear." That was his ideal of the man that the German genius was to produce, as it had produced men like Luther and Frederick at every crisis in the national life. He was, however, repelled by Bismarck's internal policy. He was still a Liberal, and Bismarck's blood-and-iron was at that time directed solely against the subjects of Prussia. It was the turning point in Treitschke's transition from his early democracy to the drastic autocracy of his later years. When, in 1864, Austria and Prussia united for the purpose of ending the trouble in Denmark—which they did in the thoroughly German manner of crushing Denmark and appropriating its provinces—

Treitschke began to look with more favour on the great Prussian statesman. Still they hesitated to incorporate Schleswig and Holstein into German territory, and Treitschke's admiration also hesitated. The arrangement was that Austria should administer Holstein, and Prussia should administer Schleswig. By this time the Duke of Augustenburg had become for Treitschke "a miserable pretender," and he saw in the co-operation of Austria and Prussia the beginning of "a real State."

Leipzig had become so warm for him that he had in 1864 removed to Freiburg. Here he continued to work at his history of the German Confederation, and his lectures especially dealt with States which had won independence by the sword. He dealt with the Netherlands and the rebellion against Austria. He depicted in glowing terms the revolt of the American colonies against

England. Every page of history was made to serve the purpose of his great Pan-German ideal. One State alone could bring about this unity of Germany, and he perceived more and more clearly that that State was Prussia.

His letters clearly illustrate the strange growth of his mind at that time. He was prepared to sacrifice everything to his ideal of the State. His early Roman reading still lingered in his mind, and to the end of his life "freedom" remained one of the most familiar terms on his lips. Now, however, he begins to say in his letters: "The democratic battle-cry—first freedom, then unity—is nonsense: it means first State-rights, then a State." In another letter of the same year he says: "The might of the greatest German State must compel the power of the smaller Courts to submit to a national central Government." He began to realise that over the whole period

of German history, which he was studying, Prussia had been making steadily for supremacy. It must have been shortly after this period that he wrote the following passage in his *History of Germany*:

"More than once before had Prussia amazed the German world by the sudden outburst of its latent moral energies. So it was when Prince Frederick William thrust his little State into the rank of the Great Powers: so it was when King Frederick entered upon the struggle for Silesia. But not one of these marvels of Prussian history so thoroughly astonished the Germans, as the rapid and glorious rise of the half-shattered power, after its terrible fall at Jena. While the honoured names of the past were disdainfully reckoned among the dead, and even in Prussia everybody deplored that there was no strong young generation to take the place of the elders, a

new race gathered round the throne: powerful characters, inspired hearts, clear heads without number, a vast crowd of legal and military talents keeping pace with the literary greatness of the nation. Just as Frederick had, on the battle fields of Bohemia, only reaped what his father had sown in time of peace, so this rapid recovery of the depressed monarchy was the ripe fruit of years of hard work. The State pulled itself together and assimilated to itself all that German poets and thinkers had said, during the preceding decades, about the dignity and liberty of man and the moral purposes of life. It trusted the liberating power of the spirit: it let the full stream of the ideas of the new Germany flow over it. Now at last Prussia was the German State—the best and ablest branch of the Fatherland—and the Germans, down to the last man, rushed to the black and white standard. The soaring

idealism of a higher culture held out new duties and new aims to the old Prussian bravery and loyalty, and nerved the heart for self-sacrificing deeds for the advance of political life."

This language appears plainly in Treitschke's letters by the year 1864. He talks with the greatest bitterness about the Southern States. "I belong," he says, "to the North with all my soul." He begins to see the purpose of Bismarck. Bismarck is going to "secure for us our proper place on the North and the East coasts." The Saxons, who regarded the Prussians as still half-barbaric and were more friendly even to France, were greatly exasperated by this language. Treitschke returned their contempt. A little country, in his growing philosophy, could not be a State; it could not have the *power* which he now firmly held to be the essence of a State.

His visited Switzerland. He found the poor much more comfortable than in any of the great States of Europe. He found the brotherhood and freedom which were then beyond any other country in Europe. Yet he wrote with great disdain of Switzerland and its democracy. There was nothing "great" about it; it had no art, no science, no statecraft. Mediocrity seemed to be the plainest outcome of the institutions of a small democracy. He visited Paris also, and he reported that the only thing the German need envy in Paris was the Louvre. Everything else in Paris was equalled or surpassed in one or other town of Germany. His Prussian religion was growing rapidly. In the next year it would reach its full growth.

Since 1864 the arrangement between Austria and Prussia had given rise to constant friction. Ardent Unionists like Treitschke

were not entirely displeased with the friction. It would give Prussia the occasion that it required for annexing the Duchies, and Treitschke now began to speak openly of taking that step. "We must," he said, early in 1865, "take a revolutionary step, in the good sense of the word; we must cease to talk about law and right." His moral philosophy was rapidly accommodating itself to his German ideal. When, in 1866, the friction ended in war with Austria, Treitschke was one of the most ardent in approving the action of Bismarck. To the cries of the South German Press and the pitiful entreaties of his father, he replied: "The first duty of a good patriot is to make still greater the power of Prussia." People in Berlin kept an eye on this useful recruit in the Southern provinces. Treitschke was invited to begin his long connection with the Prussian Year Book. He asked the permission of Bismarck

to make research in the Archives of Berlin. Replying that there was nothing in the Prussian Archives to conceal from the public or from the historian, Bismarck, in a very gracious letter, gave him permission, and he went to Berlin at the beginning of 1866.

Unlike Goethe, he was deeply impressed by the power and culture of Berlin. No other German town at that time could compare in growth with the capital of Prussia, and Treitschke's ardour considerably increased. While he was in Berlin the war with Austria grew nearer. Saxony was mobilising on the side of Austria, and a bitter correspondence took place between Treitschke and his father. The young man pleaded that for him politics was only part of a larger ethic, and patriotism a moral duty. His language is affectionate and most considerate, but he was a preacher

of self-sacrifice and never for a moment hesitated to practice what he preached.

As he drew away from his father he was attracted more and more to Bismarck. The Prussian Chancellor and Treitschke seemed to be in a singular position towards each other. Bismarck saw the immense value of this dithyrambic historian of Prussia. He was, however, quite aware that Treitschke still clung to his Liberal ideas, and he tried to bring about some form of compromise. He held out to Treitschke the prospect of occupying the chair of history at Berlin after the war, and in the meantime of using his great journalistic power to influence public opinion in favour of Prussia. Treitschke replied candidly that he would not be a servant of Prussia until fully constitutional forms had been restored in the Kingdom. He therefore finished his work in the Archives of Berlin

and returned to Freiburg. He was under the impression that Baden would remain neutral during the impending war, and that he could, therefore, plead the cause of Prussia from his platform at Freiburg. He soon found that his house was watched by the police, and that it was likely to be attacked by the mob. On June 17th Baden decided to throw in its lot with Austria against Prussia, and Treitschke fled from Freiburg to Berlin. He had now completely severed his connection with the Southern States; and in the person of this Slav-Saxon, Prussia had obtained one of its most powerful and eloquent supporters.

From the moment he began literary work in Berlin his Radicalism was modified. The Liberals fought shy of Bismarck, as Treitschke himself had done in the earlier years. Treitschke rebuked them for their "obstinacy," and insisted that the question of liberty and

reform must be placed on one side until the unity of Germany had been obtained. His mild criticisms of Bismarck's opinions now ceased entirely, and he turned with greater bitterness than ever to the attack on Saxony and Hanover. He belongs, he says, "to a glorious nation," and he will see it unified before he dies. His father was now almost entirely estranged from him, but the father's death in 1867 ended this painful feature of his career.

As he was still unable to accept service in the Prussian State, he went in October to Kiel, and began to lecture on history and politics in the University. After a few months he was transferred to Heidelberg, where he continued to mix history, politics and economics, in the new science which he believed he was founding. Most of his colleagues in the University looked with disdain on his new

science, and regarded him merely as a journalist or pamphleteer. His deafness, which now became total, more or less kept him out of social life, so that he was tolerably indifferent to the opinion of the other professors. The students, on the other hand, crowded round his chair, and his influence over German young men of the middle class grew rapidly. He was now on terms of great friendship with Bismarck, and was working out the singular theory of State power and individual liberty which appeared in his later works. Bismarck had, in 1867, formed the North German Federation, of which he became Chancellor. The most important result of this was that the Prussian system of compulsory military service was imposed upon all the North German States, and a formidable army was put at the disposal of Prussia. Treitschke's Liberalism had so far waned that he welcomed

this extension of military power. Almost the only point he criticised in the new Federation was that, by special treaties, certain privileges were reserved for Bavaria, Baden, and Würtemburg.

The next step in German history was now fairly clear in the minds of men like Treitschke and Bismarck. Expansion westward was considered to be absolutely necessary for the growth of German power, and events swiftly moved onward towards the Franco-German war. Treitschke's patriotism again rose to white heat when the prospect of a war with France was made clear. When war was actually declared, he broke into the most fiery rejoicing. His students were called away for military service, and one of them has described the ardent speech with which he bade them farewell. Fichte had sent out his students in the War of Liberation with the

words "Conquer or die." Treitschke said to his students, in recalling those words, "Conquer at any price." There was a scene of wild excitement and Treitschke was regarded as a kind of hero by the students.

During the early months of the war he was singularly silent and retired. He had no doubt about the issue of the war. He was, in fact, preparing the terms which should be imposed upon France when she was conquered. In several weeks of remarkable research he traced the whole history of Alsace and Lorraine, and proved, as he believed, that they were really German, and must be taken from France at the close of the war. As he said at a later date, France had stolen the provinces from Germany, and it was an act of the highest morality to restore their nationality to the despoiled provincials. It is in keeping with his character that, when the victory was

announced, he resented the current talk about a contrast between German virtue and French vice, yet in his later history he speaks of the result of the war as a punishment of the sins of France. The formation of the German Empire was the first result of the war, and the realisation of Treitschke's dreams of the last ten years. With Gustav Freitag he agreed that the title "Emperor" was showy and melodramatic. He preferred the more businesslike title of "King," but he yielded again to the policy of Bismarck, and criticised only the fact that once more certain of their ancient privileges had been left to some of the South German States.

In 1871 Treitschke became a member of the new Reichstag. His deafness made him a singular member of Parliament, but he was determined to watch with the closest interest the development of the new Empire. He had

learned the lip language, but as a rule in the Reichstag he sat by the reporters and read their shorthand accounts of the speeches. In debates he could hardly take part, but his speeches on important issues made a profound impression on the House. He avoided rhetoric and sentimentality, even of the patriotic kind. His strong and clear convictions were expressed in language of great vigour, with occasional passages of biting wit and fierce reproof of all that stood in the way of Bismarck. "The star of our unity is rising: woe to the man who stands against it," he said occasionally in the House. He was one of the most urgent in demanding that the new provinces should be Germanised as speedily as possible, and in calling for the maintenance and further improvement of the victorious army. A short passage from one of his speeches delivered about that time will illustrate his Parliamentary method:

"There is in the world to-day, gentlemen, a dark suspicion that the German Empire, like the Prussian State of yesterday, must have its European War, its Seven Years' War. It seems to be written in the stars that the House of the Hohenzollerns can win no great success without incalculable sacrifices. God grant, gentlemen—we all wish it—that the foreboding is false. Whether it is false or not lies in the hands of fate. What lies in our hands is the task of keeping bright and sharp the weapons which have won Germany's new glory. As far as the eye of man can see the resolute armament of Germany is the only means of preserving the peace of the world to-day." He continued to sit in the Reichstag until 1888. By that time the appearance of new Parties, and especially of the Social Democratic Party, filled him with something like loathing of the Parlia-

mentary system, and he retired from his seat.

Meantime he had continued to teach at Heidelberg. He was by this time one of the most popular professors in Germany. He refused to allow women to attend his lectures, and became more conservative every year. The great prosperity of Germany, however, which followed the successful war, filled him with joy, and even in social life he began to relax. About this time the German thinker, Hartmann, revived the philosophy of Schopenhauer. It seems probable that this philosophy, which makes will the central reality of the universe, had greatly influenced Treitschke's early ideas. For him, the assertion of will was the first duty of the State, hence his great usefulness to so astute a statesman as Bismarck. But the pessimism which was connected with the philosophy now filled

Treitschke with disgust. A thinker, he said, who would put forward such a system in such glorious days as these must be suffering from spinal disease. At the same time Nietzsche began to put his weird speculations before the German public. His doctrine of power, of self-assertion, of reforming the moral code, agreed with some of Treitschke's ideas, and, although puzzled by many of its features, he welcomed the philosophy of Nietzsche. Science, it seemed to him, was joining with history in approving the ideal of German power at which he had arrived.

In 1874 Treitschke at last accepted the invitation to teach at the Berlin University, and from that time onward there was little left of his Liberalism. Bismarck entered upon the famous Kulturkampf. Treitschke dutifully described it as "the struggle of freedom against fanaticism." Every measure that

INFLUENCE OF TREITSCHKE

Bismarck brought forward had his support, although the Liberals and Radicals were growing more and more indignant with the Chancellor. When at length Bismarck found it expedient to retire from the Kulturkampf, it was mainly Treitschke who covered his retreat. That episode of German political history has never been fully clear, and many Liberals have failed to understand the action of Treitschke. The truth seems to be that Bismarck abandoned the struggle against the Catholics because a new and more formidable enemy had appeared on the horizon of the German political world. This enemy was Socialism, and, like Bismarck, Treitschke dreaded it above all other sects or parties. He now moved entirely in Conservative circles; his friends were mainly members of the aristocracy or of military or clerical rank. Amongst the students he still retained all his

popularity, and he used his influence to attack every Liberal and Humanitarian movement which arose. "Life," he said, "is too hard for philanthropic phrases"; he would be no "preacher in politics." We shall see later how all these advanced ideas, which have been embodied in the legislation of modern times, conflicted with his utterly false ideal of the State. The authorities, however, applauded and encouraged in every way his influence on the young men of Germany. His lectures were said to be a "steel-bath" for students. So good was his position that, when the great historian Ranke died in 1886, Treitschke was chosen to succeed him as "The Historian of the State of Prussia." When, two years later, the Emperor died, Treitschke was invited to deliver a memorial address. The closing paragraph may be quoted here in illustration of the gospel that he was then preaching in Germany :

"Life is to the living. The nation turns its eyes in hopeful confidence towards its young Imperial master. Every word he has yet addressed to his people breathes power and courage, piety and justice. We now know that the fine spirit of William's days is not lost to the Empire, and even in these days of grief we have lived through a great hour of German history. Our princes gathered with German fidelity around their Emperor, and with him met the representatives of the nation. The world learns that the German Emperor never dies, whoever may bear the crown. What a change since the time when the courts anxiously awaited, each New Year's Day, the orders of the mysterious Cæsar for his subjects! To-day the German speech from the throne does not devote a single word to those western powers which once had the idea of controlling the world without our assist-

ance; it is useless to reckon with enemies who cannot be taught or with doubtful friends. Whether Europe reconciles itself peacefully to the ending of the old situation, or whether the German sword must leap once more from the scabbard to protect what it has won, we are ready; we are armed for either alternative. Unless all the signs of the times deceive us, this great century, which in its earliest days was French, will end as a German century. Germany's intellect and Germany's deeds have solved the problem of combining a great traditional power of the State, with the just demands of a new social order. A day must come when the nations will realise that the battles of Emperor William did not merely create a Fatherland for Germany, but gave a more just and more rational order to the whole civilised world. Then we shall see the fulfilment of the words of the venerable poet,

Emanuel Geibel: 'One day the whole world may recover its health in the German character.'"

This was the Gospel which Treitschke was propagating amongst the young men of Germany, and one can read between the lines of it, if not in the lines themselves, the very terms of that ideal which has infatuated Germany in our day. This was the advice which the aged historian offered to the new Emperor. It was only too faithfully accepted. Bismarck was dismissed, but the worst elements of the Bismarckian policy were retained. Treitschke fully approved of the immense and burdensome task which the military authorities imposed on Germany. Once more I may take a passage from one of his speeches.

In 1895, the year before he died, he addressed the students of the University of Berlin. The speech, which has been pub-

lished, is called "In Memory of the Great War." He describes the long years of powerlessness under the shadow of Austria, the disaster under Napoleon, the "lamentable Confederation" which followed Waterloo. During all those years, he said, "we were the laughing-stock of foreigners." We had only one "loyal friend," Thomas Carlyle of England, the only non-German writer who saw "the nobility of the German soul." In England generally the very word "Fatherland" was a thing of mockery and contempt,. and no one in Europe expected any good to come of Germany. Germany itself was split into parties, or afflicted with "all the infantile diseases of politics." He went on: "As unfailing as the hammer of Thor, the sword of Germany had to strike: the changing fortune of war had to be made unchangeable, and wreath after wreath must be added to our

colours in order that this most libelled and most hated of all nations should regain its place among the powers of the world." Then Prussia "entered on the old path of victory." Still the position of Germany was not recognised, and the contempt of Europe was intolerable. "We needed a complete, indisputable, wholly German victory to compel our neighbours to respect us." King William, the "hero," gave the call, and "a free, strong, proud nation" responded.

Treitschke then gave his hearers an idyllic description of the way in which the power of the German will overbore the French in 1870, and even mothers and sisters "remembered in their grief that they had added one leaf to the growing wreaths of German glory." The Emperor "realised that Providence had chosen him and his army for carrying out its designs." Treitschke glorifies the generals,

the Chancellor, the German princes, and all the other heroes of the war. He tells the young men how Germany insisted on having an Empire at the close of the war, and how the founding of the Empire led to the amazing prosperity of Germany. Not all their hopes were realised, however. They had thought that France would, "after two decades," co-operate amiably with Germany for the advance of civilisation, and France was still dreaming of revenge. Other nations were jealous of Germany's prosperity and hampered her development beyond the seas. Moreover, "the sub-German peoples of the region of the Danube illustrate the historical law of ingratitude to the Germans, who gave them their civilisation." At home the artisans are disputing "the dominance of talent," and losing "all reverence for God, and all respect for the barriers which the nature of the sexes and the

structure of society have set to human desires." The worst feature of all is that men are losing their "reverence for the Fatherland." They are regarding their country as a social community which will enable them to earn more money and spend it in security on pleasure. This general spread of education is ruining the nation, and Bismarck himself had been very bitter and pessimistic in his last years. Still, Treitschke rejoices to think that "the idea of the Empire glows in every heart," and he concludes: "Germany has, during a quarter of a century of the most dangerous diplomatic friction, given peace to the world; not by the means advocated by pacifists, that is, disarmament, but by precisely the opposite means, armament. Germany's example turned the armies of Europe into nations, and the nations into armies, and thus made war a terrible venture; and, as no Frenchman has

said that France can win back by arms its ancient ill-gotten provinces, perhaps we may expect further years of peace. Meantime our western frontier slowly but surely spreads towards that of our ancient Fatherland, and the time will come when German civilisation, which has so often changed its seat, will again reign supreme in its own home."

He calls upon the young men to listen for the summons to the colours: to be ready for either peace or war. And his last words have a sinister application to the hideous trouble that is confronting us in Europe to-day: "God bless our Emperor and King, God give him a wise, just, and firm Government, and give us the power to sustain and *enlarge* the proud legacy of those glorious days."

There, less than twenty years ago, only some months before his death, we have the

complete doctrine which Treitschke put into the veins of the present generation in Germany. To his last hour the State was to him the stern bearer of the sword. Far from being content with that massive prosperity of which he had written the history, he still called upon the young soldiers of Germany to extend their frontiers at the cost of other people's. There can be no question but that this teaching, given with all the weight of the chief chair of history in Germany, written eloquently in a dozen popular works, and thundered occasionally from great popular platforms, was one of the chief elements in the making of the Germany which we confront to-day. Treitschke died at Berlin on April 28th, 1896. His teaching lives in the pernicious book of his pupil Bernhardi, in the Manuals of Instruction of the German officers, and in the hallucinations of the German Press. That teaching we may

now examine more closely, in so far as it is responsible for the swollen ambition and lamentable methods of the modern German army.

CHAPTER II

GLORIFICATION OF GERMANY

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Glorification of Germany

The chief feeling of the German people, which one would not at first be disposed to connect with their scholars, is the inflated idea of the position and mission of their country. Nothing is perhaps more repellent in the German Press of the present day than the claim that God is watching with especial favour their unscrupulous enterprise and the brutal method by which it is conducted. We read constantly of their assurance that conquering another country is only a painful necessity in the discharge of their mission to raise it to a higher civilisation. Undoubtedly many Germans have a sincere conviction in this respect. The

most eccentric utterances of the Kaiser will be found anticipated to some extent in utterances of some of the learned professors of the German universities, and it is perhaps one of the most startling results of the study of Treitschke's works that he fully encourages the stupid and mediæval idea that God is, through the Emperor, directing the army and the German people. The most inflated idea that any German daily is at present impressing on the minds of its readers seems at times to be little more than a repetition of the passages in which Treitschke exalts Germany, and especially Prussia, above all the nations of the earth.

The doctrine of Treitschke is a singular mixture of his own temperament, the influence of contemporary events, and his professional reading of history. A man of great physical vigour, he made an ideal of vigour, as such men are apt to do. "Greatness" was the

feature which above all others he sought in a State. Hence he came to the singular view that "power" is the essence of the State. This view was fully confirmed by the history of Germany through which he lived. He knew from his reading the condition of Germany in the time of Goethe. The whole of the early German literature bears witness to the sterility and powerlessness of the country. It was not one great nation, but a great race shattered into a hundred small States, and apparently laid powerless by this dispersion. Treitschke then saw the contrast between the power and prosperity of a united Germany and the helplessness of the hundred small States of the earlier days. It was not unnatural, and not entirely wrong for him to suppose that the concentration of power had brought about the wonderful success of his country. He saw further that the one great

instrument in the restoration of German power was the Prussian army. Again he concluded that power, and chiefly military power, was the first aim or institution of a great State.

His study of history, which ranged from ancient Rome and Greece to the latest developments of Europe, easily confirmed him in this theory. In his chief work, where he expounds with great learning and ingenuity his theory of a State, there is one remarkable defect. He begins by insisting that the essence of a State is power. He nowhere proves that this is a legitimate and essential character of a State. We will examine later how he supposes that the State can be something greater than the people who compose it, and therefore justified at times in imposing authority against their will. For the moment it is enough to observe that his conclusion was drawn in a somewhat superficial way from the pages of

history. The nations that stand out in the pages of history, the nations that we are accustomed to call great, are the large and powerful military nations.

Treitschke did not overlook such States as Athens and Florence and their great artistic work. Here he is somewhat feeble in his reasoning. He knew well that they had no great military power, and he weakly ascribes their success to their constant intercourse with more powerful nations. He overlooks the fact that the philosophy of Greece and the art of Florence immensely surpass those of the more powerful nations with which they were in contact. He also overlooks the fact that in modern times, when every nation is richly connected with each other, the stimulus which he supposes in the case of Athens and Florence may be enjoyed by any small State in the world.

Treitschke, however, read history mainly for the purpose of supporting his idea of the State. We find him repeatedly scoffing at small nations. Curiously enough, he bases his remarks upon Aristotle, who belonged to a State which from the German point of view was most emphatically so small as to be unworthy of recognition. From this he goes on to examine the supposed decay of Holland and Spain, and other nations when they cease to be great military powers. A passage from his chief work, *Politik*, gives his full argument :

" A State must have a certain size. A ship which is only a foot long is, as Aristotle rightly says, not a ship, because you cannot sail in it. A State must, in addition, have sufficient material power to defend by arms the independence which is granted to it on paper. A political community which is not able to assert itself among its neighbours will always

be in danger of losing its character as a State. That has always been the case; great changes in the military arrangements have destroyed a large number of States. Since in our time an army of 20,000 men cannot be regarded as more than one weak army corps, the small States of central Europe cannot possibly last. There are, it is true, States which are not defended by their own forces but by the condition of equilibrium. That is clearly the case with Switzerland, Belgium and Holland; they are protected by the international balance of power. This is a very firm foundation, and Switzerland may count on a very long lease of life provided that there is no material change in the present group of European States." (It should be noticed that Treitschke says nothing about Belgium and Holland. The omission, when we connect it with other passages relating to Belgium and Holland,

which will be quoted later, shows clearly that Treitschke himself fully approved the design of Germany some day to acquire Belgium and Holland.)

"Applying the test of self-government, we find the larger States of Europe rising to greater and greater power. The whole development of our States tends very clearly to the extermination of all the States which are of only secondary rank. If we take the non-European world into consideration there is a very serious prospect for us (Germans). Germany has always come off very badly in the distribution of territory beyond the seas amongst the European Powers, yet it is a matter of life and death to us as a great State to obtain territory beyond the seas. Otherwise we are faced with the terrible prospect of England and Russia dividing the world between them; and one wonders which would be the worse

evil, the Russian knout or the English purse.

"Looking more closely into the matter, we see clearly that if the State is power, only the really powerful States can be described as such. Hence the obvious absurdity which we find in the character of a small State. Weakness is not in itself ridiculous; it is only the weakness which would pass itself off as strength. In small States you get the vulgar disposition to estimate a State according to the amount of taxes it levies; the frame of mind which cannot see that the State, like the shell of an egg, cannot protect without exerting some pressure, and that the moral goods we owe to the State are priceless. In giving birth to this materialism the small State has a very mischievous influence on its citizens.

"The small State is totally devoid of the

large States' power to be just. If you have cousins enough in a small State, and are not quite an idiot, you are provided for . . . Moreover the economic superiority of large States is obvious. In such ample proportions one has a greater feeling of security. . . . It is only in great States that there is developed the genuine national pride which is the symptom of a nation's moral robustness: the sentiments of the citizens are freer and larger in large institutions . . . no great nation can last long unless it has a great metropolis of culture. Culture in the broadest sense of the word always flourishes better in the ample circumstances of great States, than within the narrow limits of small States . . . Taking history as a whole, we see that all the masterpieces of poetry and art were produced on the soil of great nationalities. Proud Florence and Venice had so wide a commerce

that there could be no question in their case of the Philistinism of the small State. There was an ideal pride, which recalls ancient Athens, in all their citizens. When did a masterpiece ever arise among a small people?" (pp. 43-48).

The defects of this historical argument need hardly be pointed out. Neither Athens nor Florence had the great commerce which he ascribes to them, and, even if they had, we have to reckon with the fact that they so far surpassed the larger powers with which they had intercourse. Take the case of the mediæval Italian Republics, in which art flourished so luxuriantly. It is true that they had constant intercourse with the German Roman Empire, and with France. Yet they learned nothing from either, and became, in fact, the teachers of each. But we need not linger over the sophistry of Treitschke's argument.

It is enough to show how one of the chief professors of history in Germany twists his learning into the service of the national ideal, and helps to build up the megalomania of the modern Empire.

More interesting, and perhaps more startling is Treitschke's contribution to the religious side of this megalomania. He was by no means an orthodox Christian. His letters to his father in earlier years very frequently turn upon his father's sorrow at his abandonment of the Protestant faith. This, however, was part of his early Radicalism. Although he probably never altered his conviction, he began in later years, as a matter of policy, to make a strong profession of supporting the Lutheran Church. Like Carlyle, of whom he speaks with such admiration, he made the mistake of taking the masses as they are and supposing that their character could not be altered. He

noticed that their heroes were always either military or religious heroes. In order, therefore, to confirm them in sentiments which could be so much utilised by the Prussian Government, he took up an old theory of his professor, Dahlmann, and, in working out this theory, he spread sentiments which are largely responsible for what we call the more blasphemous elements of the German megalomania. He says in his *Politik*:

"The idea of a world-Empire is hateful: the idea of a State of Humanity is no ideal at all. The whole content of civilisation could not develop in a single State; in no single people could the virtues of aristocracy and of democracy be united. All peoples are, like individual men, one-sided, and the richness of the human race consists in the totality of their partial natures. The rays of divine light are infinitely reflected in individual peoples;

each presents a different aspect and a distinct thought of the Deity. *Hence any single people has the right to believe that certain forces of the divine reason are most beautifully embodied in itself.* Without exaggeration a people cannot attain self-consciousness. The Germans are always in danger of losing their nationality because they have too little of this massive pride. The average German has very little political pride; but even our Philistines boast a social pride in the freedom and universality of the German spirit: and that is a good thing, for such a feeling is necessary if a people is to maintain and to assert itself."

This was the language which Treitschke used to the students of history in the University of Berlin. When he addressed the people he used an even stranger language. We have a speech which he made at Darmstadt, in

1883, on "Luther and the German Nation." In this he reviews the "Glorious history of Germany" from the earliest dawn. He finds that the Germans were the first barbaric people of western Europe to see the beauty of Christianity, and that from their earliest conversion they always frowned on the corruption of Rome. They alone had the courage to rebel. Our historian contrives to overlook the Albigensians and other heretics who preceded the Reformation, and his analysis of the Reformation itself is superficial in the last degree. He is determined to place the whole merit of the Reformation in the character of Germany, and completely disregards the circumstances which made Germany so favourable a soil for the sentiment which was spreading throughout Europe. He says: "Only a man who had in his veins the boundless power of the German spirit could

venture upon so mighty an achievement." Italy had its Petrarch and its Machiavelli—he makes no mention of Dante—but "the Latin peoples had not the strength to take their own ideas seriously: they succeeded in halving their consciences and obeying the Church which they despised. The Germans dared to shape their lives by the truth which they perceived; and, since the historical world is a world of will, since it is not ideas but will that controls the destinies of peoples, modern history does not begin with Petrarch nor with the artists of the Rennaissance, but with Martin Luther." Treitschke cannot lose the opportunity to connect his Prussian idea of the State with the Protestant religion. Luther, he said, brought about a political revolution in the fact that he destroyed the old maxim that spiritual power is superior to secular, and he thus prepared the way for

the recognition of the sovereignty of the State. This was, he says, an immortal blessing for Germany. "Only in the cup of Protestantism could the ailing nation find its rejuvenating draught." It occurs to him that when the most oppressed part of the nation, the peasants, deduced from the principles of the Gospel that they were entitled to a larger share of the world's goods, Luther was one of the first to crush them. This was, Treitschke says, because the peasants took his Gospel "in a fleshly sense," and because Luther "shared with his people their reverent awe of the Imperial Majesty and of the noble young blood of Austria."

Treitschke proves, in this address to the Protestants of Germany, that even the new science and the new literature of Germany in modern times were due to the Reformation. He does not mention names, but he implies that

such men as Goethe and Schiller were, as he says, "thoroughly Protestant." "It was only from the autonomy of conscience which Luther gave us that the new ideal of humanity could spring." Luther's greatness and the varied nature of his powers cannot be understood by foreigners, according to Treitschke. The Germans, however, quite understand him, because "he is blood of our blood." "From the sunken eyes of this robust son of a German peasant blazed the heroic old spirit of the Teutons, which does not flee the world but seeks to govern it by the might of its moral will."

The closing part of the speech unites the theory of the Reformation with the political ambition of Prussia in a remarkable manner, and shows us how Germans get the conviction that they are only carrying out a divine purpose in trampling on the lands of their

neighbours. "In so rich an age as ours no good Protestant should lose the hope of even better days to come, since our whole people sees in Martin Luther its hero and teacher. We all know that at one time even a half-success of the Reformation was of great advantage to our country." He hints that the complete success of the Reformation, which the world needs, will only be accomplished by the entire expansion of Germany. In the Middle Ages, he says, a Schism was good for Europe; now the whole German nation must be Protestant. That holds out an uncomfortable prospect for the Catholics of Posen or of the Rhine Valley, and for the Jews and other non-Protestants. There must, according to Treitschke, be in Germany one great Church which "recognises the evangelical freedom of the Christian and the independence of the loyal and penitent conscience, and

grants their just rights to the moral powers of this world, especially the State." One must remember that these words, which, in pamphlet form were scattered over Germany, came with the authority of the leading historian of the country. It is hardly surprising that less learned Germans have succeeded in convincing themselves that through the Prussian Army God is working out His purpose in the world.

This language, however, was hardly suitable for the class-room, and Treitschke turned to other arguments which would scientifically convince his pupils of the unique position of Germany. Germany, as is well known, and especially Berlin, is falling away from the old Lutheran religion. More secular considerations had to be invented for the unbelievers. These arguments Treitschke finds in the history, the geographical position and the

culture of Germany. I have already explained that the word "culture" as used by the German means something very different from what we mean in English. The truth is, that even Treitschke had very little regard for culture as such. The State, he said repeatedly, "is not an academy of arts and sciences." He has a great disdain for most of the really great scholars of Germany. We must recognise, and until yesterday we did recognise, that German culture is one of the finest cultures in modern civilisation. Since the rise of Prussia, Germany has not only contributed more original philosophy to the world than any other three countries of modern times, but in every branch of science she has sustained her high position. It is a truism also, that she has attained great efficiency in education, industry and commerce, and some of the German experiments

in social improvement have been adopted as models in other countries. It is well for us to recognise this solid nucleus of German pride, but the truth is that for men like Treitschke even these things are of secondary consideration. It is the organisation of Germany as a power-State, in other words, it is Prussianism, that he regards as the chief distinction of his country. He repeatedly boasts that Germany is the most perfect monarchy under the sun, and we shall see in the next chapter how, in his official lectures, he praises the German constitution and bitterly disdains the English constitution, which even German reformers were disposed to admire. This misunderstanding of German culture has made the German mind almost unintelligible to many people to-day.

The confusion is perhaps all the more natural when we find Treitschke speaking constantly

of the "idealism" of Germany and the "materialism" of England and other countries. Once more, however, he takes idealism in a peculiar sense. In a lecture on "Fichte and the National Idea" he says: "It will last, this much-desired idealism of the Germans. A grander future will open for this idealist people when a righter philosophy unites in one great system of thought, the results of our political activity and the immense wealth of our empirical knowledge. We who live can best sustain the spirit of Fichte if all the nobler of us work for the growth and ripening in our fellow citizens of 'the character of the warrior' which knows how to make sacrifices for the State. When Fichte's name is mentioned, people think at once of the orator who cried out to an oppressed people those heroic words: 'To have character and to be

German are beyond question the same thing.'"

One needs very little knowledge of German history to recognise that this is sheer abuse of the doctrine of Fichte. Against the despotism which Treitschke was supporting in Germany, Fichte would have protested with all his soul. It was in the war against the despotism which Napoleon tried to fasten on his country that Fichte summoned his students to cultivate the spirit of the warrior, but Treitschke, as an historian, twists every fact and every authority to suit his purpose. Idealism in his mind is above all things the military spirit and a readiness to sacrifice one's life and property for the State. The State is a kind of Moloch in his philosophy. Time after time the people must offer their finest sons in the supposed sacred ceremonialism of the State. In his later years Treitschke

found a very different idea of the State growing in the new generation. Men and women were concluding that the State was a social group, under the security of which their lives would be blessed with greater happiness and prosperity. This is really what Treitschke means by "materialism." One smiles to-day at the obstinate and antiquated views, but in their time they served the purpose of Prussian ambition, and we still find echoes of Treitschke's sonorous voice in the Press of modern Germany.

In another place, Treitschke attempts to show in a different way the peculiar fitness of Germany to carry out the mission of civilisation. He sums up the supposed advantages which Germany has by entering at a late date into the family of great Powers. Most of us realise that this late accession to power has brought with it one great

disadvantage. A new Power, like a young man, is apt to have inflated ideas of its strength and its future. It is hardly more than forty years since Germany became a great manufacturing State, and again we must make some allowance for a very natural conceit which arises from the consciousness of this prosperity in the present generation. Older nations like England, long accustomed to a similar prosperity, have ceased to use the bombastic language which it at first inspires. When we smile at the language of German writers, we have only to turn back a few pages in English history to find precisely similar language used by Englishmen. Treitschke, however, with his pseudo-scientific method, tries to convince his university students that Germany is really in a different position from other States. He says:

"We are later in our political development

than other European States, and therefore we can be more universal. We have been able to make use of the wisdom of our predecessors, as is seen in the development of our literature. Beyond question Germany has, in the nineteenth century, taken the lead in political science, after having depended on foreigners for two centuries. The way in which the threads of our destiny have been broken at times, and the tortuous course of our history, have at least had the advantage of preserving us from the political traditions and prejudices which confuse the political thought and judgment of other peoples. The complex action of our State is due to our position in the world, our history, and our geographical circumstances, in virtue of which we are able to do things which seem to other nations impossible. . . . We are, moreover, the most monarchical people in Europe, although with this we must also combine a

considerable measure of popular representation. We have solved the problem how an educated people can be an armed people; and we will solve the still more difficult problem, how a wealthy people can secure for itself the moral advantages of an army and of war. It is especially the many-sidedness of the German character which has enabled us to overcome all our difficulties, and this conquest is a large part of our importance and greatness" (*Politik*, I., 86).

I will not stay to discuss the evidently strained argument of this passage. Treitschke is fond of pouring ridicule on the men who took their wisdom from books only, instead of studying the facts of life at first hand. Considering that almost the whole of the wisdom of this deaf man was necessarily drawn from books, we see that he is merely quarrelling with people who differ from him.

His learning is purely bookish, and his theories have been built up without any control from the facts of life. However, he goes on to show that these peculiar advantages of Germany not only explain its present greatness, but justify its constant dream of further expansion. We saw in the previous chapter how, even in his later years, he spoke quite openly of the further growth of Germany at the expense of its neighbours, and in a later chapter we shall see this at greater length. I may, however, quote here a passage in which he justifies this dream from another point of view. He is discussing, in his chief work, the influence of geographical conditions upon the State, and he says:

"Our evil lot in Germany is due especially to the purely internal policy of the house of Hapsburg. Nature herself has not been generous to Germany. The Baltic is

predominantly an inland sea ; it has very little influence on the inhabitants of the regions round about it. Two hours' journey from the coast in Pomerania you would not suspect that you were near the sea. The German coast of the North Sea is ruined by shoals. All that is as unfavourable as possible, yet we see here again how man can overcome natural obstacles. This Germany, with its miserable coast, was once the greatest sea power in the world, *and, please God, it will be again* (p. 216).

"In the matter of rivers, Germany, to which nature has in so many things been a step-mother, is very fortunate—if it realises its destiny and some day takes entire possession of its rivers. Our Rhine is the King of Rivers. What great deed was ever done on the Danube? On the Rhine you have the quintessence of historical life, wherever you

go. It is an invaluable natural possession, yet by our own fault the most useful part of it has passed into foreign hands, and it is the unalterable aim of German policy to regain the mouth of the river. A purely political union is not necessary since the Dutch have become an independent nation: but an economic union is indispensable. And we are greatly to be pitied when we dare not say openly that the inclusion of Holland in our customs-union is as necessary for us as our daily bread. Nowhere in the world do fools talk so much about Chauvinism as in Germany, and nowhere else is there so little Chauvinism. We are afraid to speak about the most natural claims that a nation can have (p. 218).

"The law of the need of a State to keep together geographically is so plain that we are surprised at the short-sightedness of the

members of the Vienna congress who, out of jealousy, imposed such a ragged and ridiculous form on Prussia. No State of any power could long remain in this condition. Prussia had to choose between giving up its western territory or, directly or indirectly, controlling the lands which cut it off" (p. 221).*

These ingenious arguments are, however, strengthened by the whole of Treitschke's reading of history. Once more he makes a mistake which is not uncommon, and in the middle of the nineteenth century was not

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* The two volumes of university lectures which have been published by Max Cornicelius with the title of *Politik* were not really written by Treitschke. We cannot therefore suppose that we have his exact words in every case. The editors have used the note-books of the students and the fairly abundant notes left by Treitschke himself; and the work was submitted to a number of old students of Treitschke before it was published. We have therefore an assurance that at least no sentiment is attributed to Treitschke in this work without full authority.

unnatural. He surveys history with a conviction that what was in the beginning always will be. He sees that certain nations have made a deep impression on the chronicle of man, and it has become the custom to speak of every nation which makes such an impression as a "great" nation. He further sees, as we must all recognise, that the power of these great military nations has often led to prosperity, and has encouraged the growth of art and high sentiments. The mistake of Treitschke, as of many historians, is to think that because in a warlike age a nation needed this powerful protection of its luxury and its culture, such protection would remain necessary under any conceivable circumstances. That, however, we will discuss more fully in dealing with his glorification of war. We must remember that it colours his entire treatment of the question of the greatness of

a State. Greatness means to him historical greatness. All the other considerations which he brings forward are only artificial supports of his central idea. He says somewhere: "It is the nature of historical genius to be national. There never was an historical hero who was not national. Wallenstein never reached the highest historical fame because he was not a national hero but a Czech [like Treitschke], posing as a German for his own purposes. He was, like Napoleon, a great adventurer of history. The really great historical genius is always inspired by nationality; and that is equally true of the writer. A great writer is a man who writes in such fashion that all his compatriots respond" (*Politik*, p. 23).

When we remember that Treitschke is the great popular historian of Germany, and picture to ourselves how he infused these

sentiments into what is in itself a great record, we can easily understand the enormous influence that he has had. In whatever way his pupils have gone beyond his principles in various directions, none have surpassed him in the glorification of Germany. His *History of Germany*, in five large volumes, is a work of considerable research and general accuracy. Probably we should not rank him as a great historian from the ordinary scientific point of view. We have already seen that his position as Historian of the Prussian State and lecturer on history at Berlin was largely political. He was a useful instrument for the carrying out of Bismarck's policy. But this position enabled him to reach a large audience and to speak with weighty authority. He is one of the chief inspirers of the megalomania of so large a part of the German people. He tells the story of the making of Germany with a

natural eloquence of the greatest sincerity. He always disdained style. The style, he said, is the man. But the sincerity and the ardent feeling give his narrative a kind of eloquence which is more convincing than the elegant art of a Gibbon or the greater learning of a Mommsen. With this natural art he tells the story of Germany in such a fashion as to bring out what he believes to be its unique genius. Every emperor, every statesman, and every soldier shares the greatness of the German spirit, and on every page he presses home the advantages which Germany has derived by a loyal co-operation with its rulers.

We shall perhaps find much that startles us in connection with the present war more intelligible after this examination of some of the pages of Treitschke's works. We have very naturally poured ridicule on the Emperor's

claim to be on terms of intimacy with the Almighty. Even this outrageous claim, however, finds justification in the works of the official historian of Prussia. His impressive theory of the Reformation and the results of the Reformation puts Germany on a level with the ancient Jews as the chosen people of God. When learned professors use such language we can hardly be surprised that peasant soldiers enthusiastically repeat it. From the middle class, to which Treitschke immediately addressed himself, his message has gone down to the lowest circles of German society. Hundreds of his pupils have become journalists, and in the more flippant and more exaggerated language of the daily paper, they have spread the teaching of Treitschke throughout the country. So the present temper of the nation has been created. So the millions have marched out under the

eagles, as deeply convinced as the ancient Romans were that their Fatherland is the greatest power of the world, and has a mission to share its power with the world by the painful process of conquering it. We can well understand that military men smile in private at the pretensions of this gospel. But it serves their purpose. The Emperor himself is evidently convinced of the truth of Treitschke's account of the genius of the Hohenzollerns. How far he and other leaders of Germany sincerely accept the idea of divine mission or of a unique genius it is impossible to say. They find, as such rulers always have found, as Bismarck found fifty years ago, that a patriotic pedant has his uses, and so the Gospel of Treitschke has been encouraged in every section of the German nation.

CHAPTER III

Vilification of England

The second chief element in the German temper which we are confronting to-day, is the disdainful attitude towards England; or, at all events, the profession of disdain for England. For the explanation of this we need hardly go back to the writers of the last generation. The time having arrived in the mind of German Imperialists when a further expansion seemed possible, it was at once perceived that England's command of the sea stood in the way. Further, German readers are well acquainted with English literature, and they must have noticed, with a satisfaction which was dangerous in their frame of mind, our

admiration for many of their institutions. In addition, the theory encouraged by many historians that nations have a certain period of life and then decay, by some internal principle, has spread widely in Germany. This supposed historical law has no serious foundation whatever. A civilisation may last for 8,000 years, like that of ancient Egypt, or 4,000 years, like that of China, or 400 years, like that of Athens or of Florence. It depends entirely upon the circumstances and upon the neighbours of a particular State. The theory, however, pleased the German. His country was comparatively new and young as a great Power, while England had been a great Power for four or five centuries. He therefore flippantly repeated the remarks of English pessimists, and persuaded himself that England was in a state of decay. When the passions of war arose, it was very easy for

this to take the form of the contempt which is expressed in the German Press to-day. Possibly the solid prosperity of England in the last ten years, and the unexpected importance of her share in the war, have only made the Germans more bitter against us.

It is of interest to see how far Treitschke used his influence to encourage this disdain of England. His opportunities were very considerable. In reviewing the history of the last century, he constantly found England connected with the interests of Germany. He was, moreover, rather an economist than an historian. His subject was statecraft rather than history. His historical narrative is always coloured by its relation to his ideal of a State. He has, therefore, not only to refer constantly to the historical conduct of England, but it is part of his plan to study and to criticise English institutions. The

petty spirit in which he does this may be shown in a humorous illustration. In justice to Treitschke it should be stated that he frequently writes with appreciation of English institutions. He never writes with admiration, but the facts are too strong occasionally for his prejudice, and he does justice to a few of the features of English life. On the whole he is unjust, and he is frequently ridiculous. In comparing the rival military systems of England and Germany, for instance, he pens the following egregious passage:

"It is a defect of the English civilisation that it does not include compulsory military service. Some compensation for this is found in the very large development of the Fleet, and in the fact that continuous small wars in the Colonies keep the strength of the nation constantly employed and ever fresh. It is due to these incessant colonial wars that there

is a good deal of physical robustness in England. Still, when we examine carefully, we find a serious defect in the country. The lack of chivalry in the English character, which falls so far short of the simple loyalty of the German, is largely connected with the fact that physical exercise is not sought in the use of manly weapons, but in the pastimes of boxing, swimming and rowing. These forms of exercise have a certain amount of value, it is true, but it is quite clear that these sports give rise to the athletic mind, with all its crudeness and with a superficial sentiment which is always looking for the first prize" (*Politik*, I, 362).

When one looks back on this observation of a learned professor, made in the lecture-room of one of the chief universities of Germany, and then thinks of the horrible outrages that were committed in the first month of the

war by the German soldiers, frequently under the direct control of their officers, one can see only the most obstinate prejudice in the mind of Treitschke. No word is more common in his glorification of the German character than loyalty and chivalry. We have seen their chivalry in the last few months. Instead of relying entirely on that bravery of the soldier which few would question, we have found Germany using a second army, all over the world, to do a kind of work which is the very opposite of chivalry ; nor does their persistent war upon civilians strike us as being very chivalrous. On the other hand, little complaint of a serious or well-founded nature has been made against the conduct of the French, English and Belgian troops. We must remember that they are fighting in their own country and have not the temptation of the German soldier, yet one need not examine the conduct

of the English troops on the field of battle in order to learn their character. The whole reference to the moral effect upon character of athletic exercises is preposterous in the extreme. Treitschke evidently had no insight whatever into the real character of other nations.

A more serious part of his work is to explain to the young men of Germany the nature of the English constitution. Here, as a representative of the highest political culture of Germany, one might expect him to proceed at least with accuracy and candour. Instead of this one finds him giving descriptions of English institutions which are absolutely ridiculous.

One may make some allowance for the effect of his own ideal of a State. Absolute monarchy is to him the perfect form of State, because absolute monarchy is the Prussian

form. Possibly no historian could survey the States of modern and ancient times in the way that Treitschke does, without allowing his description to be coloured by his own political views. For such prejudice we are prepared to make an allowance, yet this allowance cannot for a moment excuse some of the extraordinary pages, which Treitschke devotes to English institutions and the English character.

I will quote a long passage in which he deals with what he regards as the primary institution of a State, that is to say, the monarchy. Before doing so I should recall Treitschke's main idea in connection with the State. The State is power, something apart from, and superior to, the body of citizens and their interests. Treitschke therefore needs to find some mystical basis for this power, and he can only fall back on the old and outworn idea of legitimacy. One must bear this in mind

in reading his singular account of Royalty in England. After giving a glowing and exaggerated account of the successive Kings of Prussia, he turns to England. England being a constitutional monarchy, and therefore opposed to his own ideal, he deals with it in this peculiar fashion:

"The principle that even in a constitutional state the crown rests on its own right—the old Norman idea that all power and law proceed from the king—is still maintained in theory in England, and, as far as ceremony is concerned, it is scrupulously followed. But when we look into the question more closely we find, as we do everywhere in English life, that subtle hypocrisy to which the English give an untranslatable name [cant]. The droning of the parson is heard in everything and every body, not only in the Church, but in the best London society, which is as frivolous as that

of Paris, though it outwardly assumes an atrociously dull respectability. It is just the same in political life. This constitutional cant, as an able writer of our time has called it, has always affirmed the legitimacy of the Guelphs. But what are the facts? English royalty, in its legitimate and genuine form, was destroyed by the second English revolution; James II. was the last real king of England. William III. was a throne-stealer, pure and simple; the 'glorious revolution' was a very thorough revolution, and after it occurred all the traditions of royalty began to disappear. William III. was, owing to his genial character, able to play the part of a king; but from that time royalty became royalty by the grace of Parliament. In the Act which called William to the throne, it is expressly said that King James II. has by his own act, broken the treaty between the Prince

and his People, and forfeited the throne. This is one of the things that doctrinaires in constitutional law never refer to; modern English constitutional law is based on the false theory of an original contract. The Guelphs moreover, were called to the throne of England by an Act of Parliament, and they had not the slenderest title to that throne; the whole of the twenty-five Stuarts who had a better claim to the throne, were passed over. The title in virtue of which the House of Hanover rules to-day, and the house of Coburg will go on ruling, is an Act of Parliament which, in spite of legitimate right, put upon the throne certain distant relatives of the dethroned royal family. Now, since it is the very essence of monarchy that its power should be based on its own rights, it must be clear to every impartial person, that the English constitution is not very far from being an aristocratic

republic; because, in spite of the almost slavish etiquette that is followed, the real power is taken from the king, and he derives his title to rule from an arbitrary Act of Parliament instead of from his own historical right.

"That is a peculiar and intolerable state of things, and it is made worse by personal features of the English kings which have been inherited with remarkable fidelity. William III. was the last man of any importance to sit on the throne of England, and even he, being a usurper and a foreigner, never had the full power of a king. His successors have so entirely lost personal significance that, foreign usurpers as they were, they could not preserve their independent rights in face of the national pride of the nobility. A Duke of Norfolk has not much reason to look with awe upon a German prince [!] The first two Georges were

not Englishmen. George I. never even understood the English language, and he had to come to an understanding with his ministers by means of dog-Latin. He never attended a council of ministers. This development goes on to-day. It has got to such a pitch that the king's name is never mentioned in Parliament, *because he is no longer of any consequence* [nichts mehr bedeutet noch bedeuten soll]. George III. made the last attempts in England to rule as a personal monarch. They began with the betrayal of Frederick the Great [it is well known that the action of England almost preserved Prussia and Frederick the Great from destruction], and ended in shame and mockery by accelerating the secession of the North American colonies. Such were the consequences of the last attempt at personal rule made by a narrow-minded prince. When, in our day, the Prince Consort attempted to

rule in the German manner, he found that it was impossible to do so in Englan[d]. He gave up the attempt, and contented himself with teaching his wife how to occupy with a certain dignity her ridiculous position between the two parties, which she did with considerable grace.

"To sum up these English characteristics, we see how it was that Montesquieu could assert that distrust must be the prevailing spirit in a constitutional monarchy; an appalling theory, basing a noble institution on one of the lowest impulses of human nature. Yet it is to-day the dogma of all sections of Radicalism, however little they may care to express it openly. Even my good friend Dahlmann used to say, that in constitutional States political liberty had possibly less to fear from mediocre monarchs, than from really great men. Strange words for a noble-minded

and able man to speak: as if genius, which was always a gift of Heaven, could become a public danger.

"It is evidently not desirable, even if it were possible, to transfer to other States a royalty like that of England, ossified as it is by peculiar historical circumstances. Common sense tells us that those political institutions are best, which can do most good in the hands of capable men. Hence any man who says that a kingdom must be so established that it will work best under mediocre rulers is talking nonsense. The whole education of English princes is, nevertheless, directed on these lines, and it has succeeded wonderfully in maintaining the hereditary nullity of the Guelph line. No member of the family who is in a position to aspire to the throne is a soldier, in the best sense of the word. And the present situation is such that, without claiming