

## TREITSCHKE

with a naïve selfishness, and stridently calls attention to the fact that new social forces, which the legislation of the State has not yet regarded, have made their appearance. What we call in our days Liberalism approaches this social point of view. If that were the only way of regarding the State—if it were not opposed by a hard political conception of the State's duty—our national order would be broken up, and Germany would fall into countless hostile social groups. . . . A nation that lives only for the satisfaction of its social desires, which wishes only to become richer and live more comfortably, yields entirely to the lower impulses of nature. What a glorious people the Dutch were when they fought against the power of Spain! But they had hardly secured their independence when the curse of peace began to make itself felt. Adversity steels the hearts of

## THE GERMAN "KULTUR"

noble nations: in prosperity they run the risk of being enervated. The once brave Dutch nation have become creditors of their State, and have, even from the physical point of view, degenerated. That is the curse of a people that looks only for social life and loses the sentiment of political greatness" (p. 58 and 59).

One wonders how Treitschke would confront the social problems which the modern State is beginning to regard seriously in every country. He assures us that there have always been masses, and that there always will be masses. This repetition of Carlyle's doctrine of fifty years ago may, or may not, commend itself to any reader, but assuredly none will accept Treitschke's justification of the squalid poverty which lies at the base of the social pyramid to-day. More than one writer has said, like him, that the millions

## TREITSCHKE

must labour in order that the few may paint pictures and write books. A very natural point of view for the man who writes books or paints pictures, but a broader feeling is making its way into modern legislation and social effort. Against all these aspirations to do something for the poorer mass of the people Treitschke sets his face. Like war, the existence of a very large class of poor workers is an eternal part of the scheme of nature, or of Providence. A nation, he says, "is rejuvenated from below." When he perceives that the masses to-day are not entirely reconciled to this scheme, he prescribes the way in which his Kultur-State is to deal with them. He says: "It is important to remember that heroes of war and religion are the most popular with the masses: when we realise that, we know how to treat the discontented masses. The next thing

Why "broader"?

## THE GERMAN "KULTUR"

is the satisfaction of their economic needs, and in this respect we must work upon their depressed spirits with all the power of the promise which religion alone affords. This virile spirit and religious feeling, which are so strong among the masses, must be encouraged to the fullest extent. Hence national armies are a real blessing: and religion is not so necessary to any as to the common man." Once more he borrows a page from Napoleon's maxims. Treitschke, who in his earlier years had had grave trouble with his father for abandoning the Protestant religion, becomes extremely zealous in support of the clergy. They are to be, according to Napoleon's idea, the spiritual *gensdarmes*, using their authority on behalf of the autocrat. For all the terrible burdens which the State imposes on them the clergy are to assure them that they will be richly rewarded in the next world.

## TREITSCHKE

We can hardly wonder that the democracy of Berlin, which is so far Social Democrat that the other political parties could only return one member to the Reichstag in the city of Berlin, smiled on Treitschke's doctrine and conducted a scornful controversy with him. Treitschke perceived that, if you are going to share the real culture of our time with the more intelligent men and women of the working class, the basis of his servile State is undermined. Here again, therefore, we find him approaching a problem of great interest in every civilised community; how, and to what extent, are we to give real education to the masses. In such "inferior" countries as England and the United States this problem is bravely met by university extension lectures and other admirable ways of lending a hand to the aspiring workers. Germany has as many social reformers as any

## THE GERMAN "KULTUR"

other country, and the same means were being adopted in that country. To these measures Treitschke opposes the following somewhat threadbare argument:

"There is a ridiculous idea spreading among us to-day of helping the masses by giving them what is called education by means of public lectures. The ordinary man has neither the leisure nor the freedom of mind, as a rule, to assimilate the unsystematic and irregular instruction which is given to him in these lectures. Enterprises of this kind are a complete failure; they produce only a half-education of the worst kind. Regular instruction in elementary mathematics and in the mother tongue would be much more useful than such lectures" (p. 318).

He sees that in the towns there is no hope whatever of placing his old-fashioned barriers against the enlightenment of the masses.

## TREITSCHKE

His next direction is, therefore, that the workers must be kept on the land as much as possible, and he candidly says that the great advantage of life in villages is that it does not pay the demagogue to appeal to a village-audience. He adds that life in the city is unnatural and unhealthy, but throughout the whole of these pages he shows that his concern is entirely political.

In the next section he deals with the State-system of education. Here, again, he quarrels entirely with the modern spirit. This scheme, which our professors of education and our teachers have framed on the basis of a hundred years of experience, he disdainfully compares to the splendid system of elementary education which was followed in his younger days. There is not, he says, sufficient attention to religious instruction; in which many would be disposed to agree

## THE GERMAN "KULTUR"

with him until they perceive that his sole aim is to distract the workers from hopes of bettering their condition, and to infuse into them his remarkable doctrine of the divine mission imposed on Germany since the days of Luther. All this, he says, must be the essential part of the education of the children of the workers. Beyond that the only education of need is to make them useful workers and patriotic soldiers.

Whatever point of social reform we take up, we find Treitschke in the same grossly reactionary mood. Even in Germany only a very small and very old-fashioned minority would agree with him. No doubt on many points which seem extraordinary to us in other countries, such as the praise of the duel, which I have quoted in an earlier chapter, he would find many supporters. But in his attacks on the ballot-box and

## TREITSCHKE

similar elementary reforms of modern times he belongs almost to a departed generation. I will venture to quote one more passage in illustration of his attitude. The question of the death-sentence upon murderers is still a very open one in modern society, nor do I for a moment represent that in pleading for the retention of the death-sentence Treitschke is in any way singular. On the contrary, I agree with him. But the language in which he pleads for retaining it shows the whole spirit of the man. He says: "That those in authority shall bear the sword is a saying of the Bible which lies deep in the blood of every sensible man. Anyone who would remove this truth from the world, would sin against the simple moral sentiments of the people. The ultimate problems of social life are to be solved on practical, not theoretical, grounds. The conscience of every serious

## THE GERMAN "KULTUR"

man demands that blood shall be wiped out by blood. The ordinary man must doubt the existence of justice on earth if this last and highest punishment be abandoned. Think of a murderer of the type of the Australian murderers, who have the lust of murder in their blood, being condemned to life-long imprisonment! He breaks out of prison, commits murder again, and returns to the same cell, as the State has no other way of punishing him. Does not such a State outrage the moral consciousness? It makes itself a laughing stock when it cannot do away with such a criminal" (II., 427).

Finally, I may notice the attitude which Treitschke takes up in regard to every dissenter from his ideals. His conflict with the Social Democrats was bitter and fiery. He hardly ever descends to argument with them, and, when he does, it is little better than

## TREITSCHKE

platitute. The women movement had hardly begun in Germany, on a large scale, in his time, but we know how he would have met it. Again he takes his counsel from Napoleon. The woman's place is not merely the home, but the nursery.

A third danger which he saw against his autocratic State was the permeation of the Jew throughout Europe. Here again he conducted a violent controversy, and he advocated measures of actual persecution against the members of the Jewish race. "I see," he says, "only one means that we can adopt to meet the danger: a real energy of our national pride, which must turn away from everything that is foreign to the German nature. That applies to everything and everybody: the theatre and the music-hall as well as the daily paper. Wherever the Jewish taint affects our life, the German must turn

## THE GERMAN "KULTUR"

away and learn the habit of telling the truth about it. The moderate parties in our midst are responsible for the violent Anti-Semitism which is growing amongst us" (p. 298).

In this case Treitschke shows his usual want of historical insight: indeed here he shows far less than Luther himself, who had a shrewd perception of the way in which the treatment of the Jews by Christians was responsible for the features to which Christians objected. Treitschke repeats the usual reproach that the Jews excel only in one art, the stage (which is totally false), and only in one branch of commerce, finance. Here any candid historian might have enlightened his readers or pupils. During many centuries money-lending was the only profession in which the Jews of Europe were allowed to employ their activity, and thus the financial specialism of the Jew is by no means connected with

## TREITSCHKE

features of his character, but is entirely understood from his history. With the Jews, the Roman Catholic and all other classes of dissenters fell under the lash of Professor von Treitschke. Despotism in the monarch, absolute and uniform docility in the subjects, are the features of the new religion and the new State.

This dreary and appalling Sparta was to be imposed upon the world by the triumphant march of the German armies. Not the culture of the scientific or artistic world, but this grim political scheme, is what Treitschke meant when he put the word "Kultur" on the sacred banners of the German Crusaders. History was to be a succession of peoples living under this ghastly rule, and every few years pouring out their blood in struggles with their neighbours for the assertion of their will and their power. This would reduce

## WORKING OF THE POISON

Treitschke held out to the individual the Stoic ideal of morality and self-sacrifice: Nietzsche despised the Stoic ideal, and scoffed at altruism and self-sacrifice in every shape. Treitschke glorified Germany and Prussia: Nietzsche had a great disdain of everything German, and not an atom of respect for the Prussian system.

Yet with all these differences the most daring rebel of modern German thought, united with the most reactionary conservative of modern Germany, in impressing upon the middle-class some of the sentiments which have broken out in the present war. Professor Cramb wrongly states that Treitschke was always bitterly opposed to Nietzsche. From the first he saw how far Nietzsche's views agreed with his own, and to the end of his life he had a kind of grudging sympathy with Nietzsche. Treitschke hated what is called

## TREITSCHKE

“Young Germany,” and it was these young Germans, scoffing at almost everything which Treitschke held sacred, who came particularly under the influence of Nietzsche.

The common features which I have pointed out will show how the influence of the two powerful features coincided. Both glorified war in the same ultra-rhetorical language. Nietzsche's chief advice to the man who would follow his advice was: “Live dangerously.” It was precisely the advice which Treitschke was giving to the model State. Even their difference in regard to Christianity will be found on careful examination to be not quite so deep as it seems. Nietzsche's scorn of Christianity was chiefly based upon the fact that, as he supposed, Christianity had brought the doctrine of mercy and unselfishness into the world. Although we have found Treitschke recommending the Christian religion as

## WORKING OF THE POISON

the Gospel of Love, we have seen enough to realise that this was a hollow phrase. There was no room for love, or tenderness, or sentiment in Treitschke's scheme. He has told us again and again that sentimental weakness, or what he is fond of calling the feminine nature, is merely a danger to a State. Where he differs from Nietzsche really, is that he denies that Christianity imposes any such sentiment. We remember his theory of the free Christian conscience, which has been introduced by Luther. This new type of conscience has, in the first case, to serve the purposes of the State, and in Treitschke's mind it takes the form of a hard and repellent ideal which is very closely similar to that of Nietzsche.

They agree further in regard to morality, much as they seem to differ at first sight. Treitschke spreads an unctuous moral language

## TREITSCHKE

over the whole of his works: Nietzsche seems to be a fiery rebel against moral law on every page of his writings. Yet here again there has been a notable agreement. Nietzsche does not wish to abolish moral law, but, as he puts it in his works, "to transvalue moral values." That is precisely what we have found Treitschke doing time after time. If, he has told us, politics is to be moral, morality must become political; and we know by this time what political conduct means. In other words, both men rebelled against the characteristic sentiment of modern times, which some will call Christian and some call Humanitarian. There are other agreements between the two men, and some of these again are important. Treitschke, we saw, was bitterly opposed to Socialism and to democracy in any shape or form. Nietzsche was just as bitterly opposed to those

## WORKING OF THE POISON

tendencies of political thought. Again the followers of the two professors found themselves on common ground.

Other coincidences need not be explained at any great length. I may mention only, as illustrating this remarkable agreement of two men who were so utterly different in aims and characters, that they came to a similar conclusion in face of what we call the women-movement. Nietzsche crudely said: "If you are going to the women do not forget the whip." Treitschke was much too polite a person to use such language, but his ideal was substantially the same as that of Nietzsche. Men had a work to do in the world which women were utterly and eternally incapable of performing.

This very brief examination of Nietzsche's ideas will suffice to show how the large class of "Young Germany," which sneered at

## TREITSCHKE

Treitschke, still came under the influence of the same ideas. Indeed, many of the new generation belonged to both schools in a somewhat muddle-headed way. General von Bernhardi is a remarkable example of that class, and the soldierly bluntness with which he applies the vague principles of Treitschke shows how the next generation was shaping the gospel to its own ends. From both sides war was being exalted, and the military strength was becoming its greatest consideration. The language of the philosophers was, as is usual, borrowed by the journalists, and the doctrine of will and power pervaded the whole literature of Germany.

As the time went on it became more and more apparent, that this vague aspiration to strike some person or some Power must ultimately be directed against England. People waited for "the hour," as they freely called

## WORKING OF THE POISON

it in military and other German circles, and any enlightened English journalist might have discovered any time in the last few years that this preparation was going on. If we had translated the works of Treitschke and his followers into English at an earlier date, no one would have believed that such fanatical sentiments were shared by any very large proportion of the German nation.

So the German mind went on fermenting in its design until the hour struck. England, the great and real adversary, seemed to be embarrassed by at least the chances of civil war in Ireland and in South Africa. The colonies seemed to be growing more and more independent, and might decline to take on their shoulders a part of the Mother's burden. Both in India and in Egypt a strong national party was arising which might be trusted to take advantage of any grievous disturb-

## TREITSCHKE

ances in England. On the other hand, the great political power which the Bismarckians dreaded in Germany, that is to say, Social Democracy, was making appalling progress, and the nation must be diverted from this examination of schemes of social betterment, by the old cry of national unity against a national peril. In fine, new devices in artillery, in aircraft and in ships had been discovered by the naval and military authorities, and it was felt that the sixteen-inch howitzers could not very long be hidden in the cellars of the Essen works. This accumulation of circumstances clearly indicated the time for declaring war. How far German intrigue was responsible for the actual declaration, or for the failure of Austria and Russia to agree upon their quarrel—I need hardly say that for most of us there is no uncertainty about the matter—may be left to the impartial verdict

## WORKING OF THE POISON

of the future historian or of other nations of our time.

It must not be supposed, however, that the entire German nation has entered upon this war in the spirit of Treitschke, or even in the spirit of Nietzsche. We have had enough experience of the entire unscrupulousness of Prussian agents and Prussian officials to understand that the German people have been deliberately misinformed. When we find their leading theologians and professors of international law zealously defending the action of the Government, we must make careful allowance for a probable misrepresentation of the facts. Those of us who are well acquainted with their writings know that the vast majority of them hold, and hold sincerely, precisely the same humanitarian ideals as ourselves; and that the character of the cultivated man to-day, whether he be called German or English

## TREITSCHKE

or American, has the same standard of conduct. They are not men who approve of deliberate mendacity, and most assuredly not men who approve of brutal outrages on civilians.

They have, however, as we well know, been taught for years that England regards their national prosperity with jealous and malicious sentiments, and is eager to grasp the first opportunity to destroy the young German Empire. This belief has so saturated the Press and literature of Germany for years, that it must have made an impression on the minds of even the most judicious. We must remember always that, however much it may be to our credit, we have made no serious effort to counteract the campaign of misrepresentation which the agents of Prussia have conducted for many years. When the war is over, and the tariff-walls against truth are

## WORKING OF THE POISON

broken down, probably large numbers of these German scholars, at whom some of our writers scoff to-day, will join with us in condemning the action of the German troops.

We are to-day writing one of the most tragic pages in the history of mankind. A nation akin to us in blood, admirable at least in its courage and the success which has rewarded its courage, is nearing the climax of its career. Class for class, the German people correspond very closely to ourselves. I remember sitting a few years ago in a little inn near the old battlefield of Jena. With me was one of the most eminent scientific men of Germany, and, as we sat over a Thuringian steak and a glass of Thuringian ale, the simple country folk came in and out of the dining-room, greeting their distinguished fellow-citizen, and receiving from

## TREITSCHKE

this Privy Counsellor of the German Empire the most sincere and brotherly greeting. Nothing could possibly be farther from the ideal of a nation which is suggested to us in the abominable pages of Heinrich von Treitschke. Yet this fine and prosperous people has been cursed by his mighty hallucination. Travelling amongst them, I have heard them complain that our commercial rivalry is bound to lead to disputes, and, in order that England may not dictate the verdict, they must have a Fleet equal to our own. Yet all the time their statesmen were hindering the setting up of the International Tribunal which would have given a just verdict on such quarrels without the shedding of a drop of blood. Dazed and deluded by the Treitschkean ideal, that war is a salutary discipline, and that they had a divine mission, they rushed blindly over the fields of Europe,

## WORKING OF THE POISON

and scattered pain and outrage over Belgium and France.

The issue of the war is certain. We have to compare the resources of the Allies on one side, and of Austria and Germany on the other. The resources of the Allies are immeasurably the greater. In order to balance this disadvantage the Germans will have to destroy their opponents far more rapidly than their own troops are destroyed. The precise opposite of this has been happening ever since the beginning of the war, and we have no grave reason to suppose that there will be any change. Already Germany and Austria have lost more than a million and a half of their sturdiest citizens, and Germany alone must have wasted at least £300,000,000. If the war lasts as long as some of our military experts predict, the great and aspiring Empire is obviously doomed. The ring of steel is

## TREITSCHKE

already narrowing round its frontiers, and its more thoughtful citizens must see that nothing less than a miracle can save them from ultimate defeat. Yet it is certain that that ring of steel will draw inward and inward until it confines the heart of the German Empire.

We all trust that the age of vindictive punishment is over; but Europe owes it to its own finer sentiments that Germany shall be made powerless for ever to attempt to carry out its appalling ambition. It will lose at least five of its provinces, with a vast proportion of its population. It will lose some of its new colonies. It will lose, and never recover, a large proportion of the commerce which it has laboriously built up; and it will shoulder an indemnity-debt which will crush the last trace of its morbid ambition. Thus history will give a reply to its Berlin inter-

## WORKING OF THE POISON

preter ; and Germany will realise with amazement that, in spite of all its hollow or mistaken cries of moral duty and divine mission, a world armed with an outraged sentiment of justice, will brand for ever the colossal immorality of the man who seduced it.









