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THE EUROPEAN SITUATION.

At the beginning of May Europe was suddenly thrown into agitation by a shock of alarm which vanished as quickly as it came. We were supposed to be on the eve of the most serious complication. In the midst of profound peace war seemed ready to flame out, in defiance of every reasonable forecast and without a single element of provocation. It has been suggested that the newspapers spread these disturbing rumours for the sake either of gaining attention by sensational news, or else of favouring certain speculations on the Stock Exchange. This is no explanation. On the contrary, the newspapers generally ignored the imminence of the danger, and the English prints which were the first to point it out, were correctly informed. We cannot hope to get to know the details of a set of incidents which took place in the cabinets of the great powers and in the councils of sovereigns. Probably none but those who moved in the affair have any exact idea of what it meant. As it is, nobody has any interest in unveiling the secret of a comedy which might have ended in bloody tragedy. In any case, what is certain is that the situation of Europe must be singularly troubled and peace very precarious, for such an incident to stir alarms so deep, and, if we may believe Lord Derby, so well grounded.

I.

Evidently the dangers of the situation arise from the difficulties in which Germany finds herself—difficulties that are the nearly inevitable result of the last war, and of the conditions of the treaty that ended it. It is impossible that the map of Europe should be modified in a notable degree, and that a new empire should come into existence, without quickening the germs of future complications. The vanquished think of recovering what they have lost. The victors rouse jealousies. They know this; they fear it; and naturally they wish to anticipate possible alliances, or to make themselves

strong enough to be able to see them without apprehension. Hence follow strong temptations, and even apparent necessities to resort to arms as a means of arriving at a more secure position.

Many persons supposed that after their bewildering success in France the Germans would be carried away by the same sort of infatuation as destroyed Napoleon, and that the intoxication of their victories would have driven or tempted them to new conquests and the realisation of the dream of European hegemony. Various circumstances appear to make this a remote peril. First, Germany is not led by one man, as was France in the hands of Napoleon. By the side of the great Chancellor, and above him, is the Emperor; and around the Emperor are the generals and the court. There are also the Chambers, which could not hinder war, but whose resistance, if they were backed by the sentiment of the country, would present a certain obstacle. Different points of view, different interests, different wills, are thus found in presence of one another. This may well make it difficult for extreme designs to prevail. Count Moltke, who prepared the dazzling achievements of his forces, is a man of cold and sober intelligence, not at all likely to attribute his victories to his star. He is perfectly aware that he owes them to the number of his soldiers, to the organization of his legions, to the rapidity of their mobilisation and concentration, to the precision and right conception of his plans of campaign. There are no signs that the great captain is infatuated by his triumphs, or that he desires a war for the sake of new laurels. The Report of the Head-quarters Staff, containing the campaign in France, is a pattern of modesty, veracity, and good sense. It is assuredly not the work of a head intoxicated by the fumes of pride. Nor does the Emperor seem, any more than Count Moltke, to be animated by that ambition of the conqueror which is for ever pushing on to new enterprises. As for Prince Bismarck, his one end and aim is to secure the unity of Germany, but so far everything goes to show that he is too astute a politician to compromise his work by excess. When the same man is at once the absolute sovereign disposing at his good pleasure of all the resources of the state, the directing minister who conducts foreign relations as he thinks best, and the general who commands the army and reaps the glory of its successes, then intoxication may well be feared. If such a man carries off extraordinary victories, he may believe himself clothed with a providential mission, and may be bent on realising all sorts of grandiose schemes and insensate reconstruction of states. In Germany to-day the sovereign, the minister, and the general, form three personages who are probably not always in accord, and who will at any rate not all be seized at the same moment by mental vertigo. There is therefore no ground for thinking that Europe sees a revival of the extravagant enterprises

of Napoleon I. But peace is none the more assured for that, for *logically* it seems as if war must result from the actual situation of Germany. Two causes make that way: first, the religious difficulties; second, the relations with France. Let us examine these two points in turn.

The ecclesiastical laws which have furnished the struggle in Prussia between the priesthood and the state contain in themselves nothing violent or unjust. The first of these laws—that which is the cause of the angriest dislike—stipulates that henceforth an ecclesiastical employment in one of the Christian churches shall only be confided to a German, who has studied for three years in one of the universities of the country, and undergone a scientific examination settled by the state. The superiors in the hierarchic order are bound to notify to the civil authority the name of those on whom the religious authorities propose to confer an office. The priest being remunerated by the state, and enjoying the use of buildings kept up by the public powers, it seems natural to require from him some proof of his capacity for duly fulfilling the important function entrusted to him. We may hold that the American system which separates the church from the state is preferable. But Rome has invariably condemned that system, and so long as the state pays the ministers of religion, it is impossible to refuse a certain right of control. In the states of South Germany, in Bavaria, in Baden, in Würtemberg, laws like those adopted in Prussia are in full vigour. Only they were promulgated some time ago in agreement with the Pope, while in Prussia they have been promulgated in spite of the Pope, with the avowed object of putting an end to the encroachments of the clergy. The catholic clergy claim that to the Pope alone belongs the right of deciding in the last instance whether even a civil law is binding. They could not therefore admit that the lay government should impose conditions on the nomination of priests. That would have been to recognise the supremacy of the state, and they maintain on the contrary the principle of the supremacy of the church. The importance of the dispute is plain. Nothing less than a question of sovereignty is at stake. Who is to be master in Germany, the civil power,—the Emperor and the Chambers—or the Pope. It is the old quarrel of Investitures, the old struggle between the Papacy and the Empire. The only way of bringing it to an end would be to adopt the American system of complete separation. But the Germans contend, and perhaps not without reason, that such a system is only good for protestant countries. In a catholic country, they say, it conducts directly to the enslavement of the state and the absolute domination of the Pope, as it is to be seen in Belgium. The state professes to ignore the church, and not to concern itself with it. But the church only admits the system provisionally, and with a view of

drawing from it the means of establishing its own power. It claims that the state should be subjected to its laws; it makes itself master of the instruction of the young, on whom it inculcates its own ideas: and it carries these ideas into triumphant practice the day after it has gained the majority in the country. The struggle is thus made inevitable, and the only alternative is to bow beneath the law of the Sovereign Pontiff who holds in his hands the two swords, the sword of civil authority and the sword of ecclesiastical authority.

What seems to prove that the conflict cannot be avoided is that it has broken out in all the catholic countries—in France, in Spain, in Italy, in Belgium, in Ireland. On the other side of the seas at this very moment it is pursued with no less violence in Brazil, in Mexico, in Chili, at Buenos Ayres, that is, throughout catholic America. The battle that is being waged in Prussia is therefore a fact that results from the condition of things, a sort of historic necessity for catholic countries.

A still more tragical cast is given to the struggle by this, that the Empire in fighting ultramontanism is in reality defending its own existence. This is what we have clearly to understand. Prince Bismarck said it in all truth in the tribune at Berlin. The war of 1870 was declared against Germany by ultramontane influences. No doubt many causes made for war; the anxiety and chagrin inspired in France by Sadowa, the necessity felt by the Emperor of regaining the respect of the army, and of finding a diversion from interior difficulties. But Napoleon saw the danger; he hesitated, and even would have been glad to shrink back at the last hour.¹ It was the

(1) This is what has been related to me by one of the actors in the drama. On the 14th of July in the morning the ministers assembled under the presidency of the Emperor. The peace party and the war party joined battle. The Emperor said not a word, but in his heart he leaned towards peace. At length one of the ministers suggested the convocation of a European congress. The Emperor greeted the idea with enthusiasm. He grasped the hand of the author of the proposal, "You save us," while two tears trickled down his cheeks. An attempt was instantly made to draw up an appeal to Europe. But this was no easy task in presence of the partisans of war, who would find in every conciliatory phrase an avowal of weakness and a humiliation discrediting the dynasty in public esteem. At last as they could come to nothing, the question was deferred to an evening meeting. In the afternoon, as M. Thiers describes in his evidence on the subject of the events of the 4th of September, the Emperor said to two foreign ministers, "It is peace. I am sorry for it, for the opportunity was good, but on the whole peace is the safer course. You may regard the affair as at an end." "The principal minister," adds M. Thiers, "used almost the same language to me, but in spite of all these assurances, at night everything turned suddenly to war." The same night at St. Cloud the Empress and M. de Gramont finally triumphed over the hesitations of the Emperor.

The Mexican expedition, which was so fatal to France, by hindering her from acting in 1866, was also mainly decided by clerical influences. The object was to constitute in Mexico a Latin and catholic empire, which by supporting the slaveholding South, would have put limits to the growth of the great Anglo-Saxon and protestant republic. The Emperor was sanguine enough of success to reveal his design. So it was clericalism which overthrew the Empire and France along with it.

Empress and M. de Gramont who, in the famous meeting of the Council of Ministers at Saint Cloud on the night of the 14th of July, decided the declaration of war. The Empress said:—" *This is my war.* God will be with us, for we shall overthrow Protestant Prussia." M. de Gramont had brought back from Vienna the promise of the co-operation of Austria within a month's time, that is to say, after the first successes. Naturally Austria would fain have undone the work of 1866 and recovered the hegemony of Germany by helping to crush Prussia. It was Russia who placed an obstacle in the way of such an attempt.

Since 1871 ultramontanism, faithful to its plan of campaign, industriously prepares the means for executing its designs, by turning to account the aims and the passions both of nations and their sovereigns. The plan is simple and is well understood. It consists in this. The restoration in France of a dynasty devoted to the church, whether by conviction, or because they would need its support: the formation of an alliance between Legitimacy, or in default of that the Empire, and Austria: support from Bavaria, and the catholic Particularists of the south and of the Rhine provinces: help, or at worst benevolent neutrality, from Russia. Now Austria and France are both of them catholic countries. Both have been defeated by Prussia and lost a portion of their power. Both then must desire revenge, for they cannot view the new supremacy of Prussia as definitely consolidated. If France ceases to be a republic and falls again into the hands of a dynasty, that dynasty cannot be anything else than clerical. Thus ultramontanism is the natural bond of all the enemies of Prussia. It is able to bring to them the contingent of all the catholic animosities that lurk in the bosom of Germany and other parts of the world, and the sympathy even of the protestant conservatives, that for instance of the English ultra-Tories. The German empire finds, then, in the papal church an adversary as redoubtable as it is implacable, which at home will refuse to obey the laws, and will thus inflame the hatred and fanaticism of the catholic populations by braving a repression that must necessarily wear the character of persecution, while abroad it will prepare an alliance among the catholic states that were defeated by Prussia, or else are disquieted by her aggrandisement or by the projects of conquest imputed to her. The plan of the ultramontane campaign springs so naturally from the situation, that in all probability circumstances will one day allow them to attempt its realisation.

Still, though the conflict between the protestant Empire and ultramontanism be sooner or later inevitable, the beginning of open war might be postponed. For if France, in her desire for revenge, is to become the instrument of the designs of the priesthood, her army must first have been reconstructed and the republic replaced by

monarchy. With its German population attached to their brethren of the north, and her Hungarian population little devoted to Vienna or Austrian hegemony, the Hapsburg dynasty finds itself in too precarious and too complex a position to act with anything short of absolute assurance of success: 1870 proved it. In Prussia the opposition of the clergy internally would have been latent, and not very energetic, if the confessional laws had not been touched. I am then disposed to think that the Prussian government, in attempting by means of repressive laws to master the hostility of the priests, made a blunder, for I do not see how it is to come victorious out of the struggle. It will imprison or exile the bishops, but can it imprison or exile all the curés? Will it leave the catholic population without pastors? The watchword has been given: no ecclesiastic will submit to the requirements of the Falk laws. In Belgium the clergy wrought two revolutions and overthrew two sovereigns, Joseph II. and William I., rather than conform to a similar legislation. You may overcome the resistance of the religious sentiment when you resort to sword and stake, as under Philip II., or to exile in mass, as under Lewis XIV. You may further weaken the adversary, when it is possible to provoke a schism, as at Geneva. But the Old Catholic schism does not make proselytes enough in Germany to effect a serious diversion, and neither fine nor prison will impose obedience on the refractory priests. On the other side the exasperation of the catholic populations will become terrible. Probably they will not rebel. The respect for authority and the fear of it are too great. But disaffection will be such that the most fanatical will look for deliverance even at the hands of the foreigner. After the victories of 1870 all alike were borne by patriotic exaltation towards German unity. To-day the intestine divisions seem to presage civil war.

There is another troublesome result for Germany. The battle with the church makes the assimilation of Alsace almost an impossibility. If they had spoken fair words to Rome as in old days; if they had increased the stipends of the curés; if they had said to them, "In France you are exposed to all the revolutionary violences, witness '93 and the Commune; the least that can happen to you is the suppression by the Republic of the Budget des Cultes; Prussia, on the contrary, is a monarchic and conservative country which has always protected the church, even under Frederick II. who laughed at it: your lot then will be better assured in the German Empire than in that Republic whose very name makes you shudder." Such language, aided by certain favours and a few thousand pounds, would have rallied the Alsatian clergy, and facilitated in a singular degree the return of the lost sister to the hearth of the great Germanic family. As it is, the Germans have against them in Alsace the attachment of the inhabitants to France, which is kept

up by a clergy who execrate Prussia. In other words, they have against them the two strongest sentiments that can animate a population, the patriotic sentiment and the religious sentiment.

Why, then, has the Prussian government, whom these considerations by no means escaped, begun and so energetically prosecuted the battle with ultramontaniam, instead of awaiting an open attack, which would not have broken out so soon? Here is the answer to this question, given to me by a German statesman, who is better able than any one else to explain the conduct of his government:—"The war against ultramontaniam was inevitable, for it conspires against us and is bent on the destruction of the new Empire. Now to resist this, we shall never be stronger than on the morrow of our victories, when Germanic patriotism is in all the flood-tide of exaltation. Are the Germans, proud of their successes and believing themselves the first nation of the world, to be willing to continue to obey the orders of a handful of ignorant Italian priests who are the foes of their race? We shall be the defenders of civilisation and enlightenment against obscurantism and intellectual bondage. In sustaining the *Kulturkampf*, we shall have on our side the friends of liberty both in Germany and in the two hemispheres. France will make herself the right arm of Rome. We on the contrary shall take the part that France has always claimed to play, the part of the soldier of progress. The battle with ultramontane absolutism is engaged along the whole line. It is the burning question of the hour. In throwing ourselves into the fray, we shall have the good wishes of all the adversaries of that intolerant priesthood which aims at the extirpation of modern civilisation. Our only chance of securing acquiescence in the new power that we have acquired by force of arms, is to make it an instrument for the emancipation of mankind. Attacked we certainly shall be, sooner or later, and perhaps when we shall be less favourably placed for resistance than we are to-day. So the earlier the battle, the better for us."

I confess that this explanation struck me. Add a further point, of which we ought never to lose sight in seeking to penetrate the resolution of Germany. The statesman who directs the affairs of the Empire, himself an officer, seems to have adopted the tactics of the Prussian generals, which consist in attacking the enemy as soon as ever they come upon him. The instant offensive in the plan of the general campaign, no less than in secondary encounters, is the common watchword. When people are well prepared, and know distinctly what it is that they want, such tactics seem good, especially against an enemy who hesitates and who cannot at once command all his resources.

Certain statesmen in Italy and Germany make sure, it is said, of weakening catholicism at the death of the present

Pope by provoking the nomination of an anti-pope. The successor of Pius IX. would be quickly chosen by the Conclave, and would probably follow the same policy. But half-a-score of cardinals, stirred by ambition, by cupidity, or by their convictions, would get up an opposition to the election of the new pope, and, making a pretext of some irregularity, would nominate one in favour of liberal ideas. Such a pope, it is believed, would carry away a certain portion of the clergy and the faithful in the various countries of Europe, and thus the formidable unity of action of the ultramontane priesthood would find itself sundered. This renewal of the Great Schism of the West seems to me hardly probable. When men like Father Gratry, the German bishops, and especially Strossmayer, bow before the proclamation of infallibility, after rising up against the new dogma with all the energy of the most absolute conviction, one is inclined to conclude that the ultramontane doctrines and aspirations will encounter no further serious resistance within the fold of the catholic church.

To conclude. A war to the death is engaged between the German Empire and ultramontanism. The latter has time on its side. It will endure, because it has its root in an indestructible and ardent sentiment. Its exaltation will become more intense as the blows struck against it multiply. These blows will raise up partisans even among those who do not share its beliefs. The end of the century will see the influence of catholicism magnified—an influence that has already increased in a marvellous degree during the last twenty years. Social struggles, wars among nations, the onslaughts of unbelief, will bring men to the foot of the altar, and will draw them above all towards Rome, who from her high antiquity and the alleged immutability of her doctrines represents most completely the principle of authority. This effect is already making itself powerfully felt in France and in England. Tenacious in its design and inaccessible in its places of retreat—that is, in the souls of men—ultramontanism will bide its time, and the moment will almost inevitably come when it will be able to unite in one group all the enemies of Germany. The Empire, unable in its own domain to crush this intangible foe, who slowly and on every side seeks to enlase it in its folds, will fain reach it from without by striking those powers which later on might act at the instigation or in the interests of the church. We see how logically the religious question leads Germany to war. We shall now see that the political situation drags it equally in the same direction.

II.

We may affirm that the very great majority of Germans ardently desire peace, and in this number we may, I imagine, include the

Emperor and his Chancellor. In former times the Frenchman, full of martial ardour, used to love war. The fumes of gunpowder, the memory of so many victories, used to intoxicate him. As M. Forcade said: For France war was a festival. This is no longer the case with the French of to-day. Still less is it so with the German who has never begun a campaign without sadness and resignation, or without the impulse of patriotic rage as in 1813 and 1870. An intense industrial crisis at this moment is at its height in Germany. The French millions have enriched nobody. They have been the occasion of a host of deceptions, and on the other hand, by leading to a rise in prices, they have brought about economic trouble, and produced severe straits in a vast number of families. Germany at the present time is gloomy, unquiet, agitated, but I do not believe she has any wish to seek conquests or diversions beyond her borders. It is alleged that her heart is set on ports, colonies, a powerful navy, and that for this end she designs the annexation of Holland. Germany in her foreign policy has given proof hitherto of much reflection and good sense. We have no right to impute to her other than rational projects. Now in taking Holland she would not have its colonies. England beyond all doubt, without any wish to keep them, would seize them, as she did when Napoleon I. joined the Low Countries to France. Thanks to the transshipping in transit and to the numerous German merchants settled at Antwerp and Rotterdam, these ports are as useful to Germany as if they belonged to her. Again, as every necessity obliges her, unless there should be a general disarmament, to maintain an enormous military establishment, would it be very wise to add to that the burden of a powerful navy of very little utility in case of a war, whose theatre would plainly be on the mainland? Germany therefore would scarcely gain anything by annexing Holland.¹ She would probably not be drawn to it, unless in case of a general war, to assure the safety of her western side or to procure a force that could enable her to resist a coalition.

Though the nation desires neither war nor conquest, we can hardly, I suppose, say as much of the army. For one thing, every army must have dreams of war, if it believe itself capable of conducting a war with success; that is its instinct, its business, its destination. The officer hopes for promotion and honour; the common soldier is drawn on by esprit de corps and excited by the

(1) It must, however, be confessed that the Dutch believe themselves to be threatened, and that they are preparing for defence by piercing the dikes. They report on this subject a saying of the Prince of Orange. He had shown to him at Berlin picked soldiers, six feet high. "We have whole regiments of such men," they said. "Well," answered the prince, "for each of your six-foot men I have seven feet of water at my disposal." Apocryphal or not, the story shows what men are thinking of.

stories of old campaigners. Most of the German military class have adopted the apology for war that is made by certain historians:—"War is useful for the progress of civilisation. It crushes worn-out forces, it spreads new ideas; it gives the pre-eminence to the worthiest. Every nation that gives itself up to peace falls into weakness and decline. Masculine sentiments, the force of sacrifice, the spring of duty, lose their virtue; for the pursuit of wealth and of the material luxury which wealth procures rises to be the one object in men's minds. As the storm purifies the air, so war disinfects the social atmosphere and braces character." Apart from such sophisms as these, more practical and unhappily juster reasons must incline the German army towards war with as brief delay as may be. It is in a state of marvellous preparation, and the other armies with which it might be called upon to measure itself are not so. Thanks to an organization which has been improved even since 1871, it can in a single week throw a million of men upon the frontier. This unequalled rapidity of mobilisation gives it an incomparable advantage even in the contingency of having to resist a coalition; it can crush one adversary before the others come into line. It has the best possible armament, and all is at its full strength. It has found the best way of utilising cavalry, and the most effective mode of attack for infantry. A state is never so much to be feared as when it has come victorious out of a struggle which has brought it into sound wind and condition without exhausting it. The generals, the officers of every grade, the private soldiers, have the experience of war on a great scale, and only they in Europe have it. Every one knows exactly what he has to do, and the whole gigantic machine would put itself in motion without more friction or waste than there is in a chronometer. Finally it has one more inestimable advantage—a single leader already appointed to prepare the plan of campaign and to direct its execution with absolute authority. In every other country, there would be hesitations, consultations, councils of war, conflicting recommendations, changes of plan on the slightest reverse,—in short all the confusion in command which was the undoing of the French army, in spite of all its valour under fire.

We must not forget that strategic conditions are completely changed. Formerly, when wars were prolonged, a first check could be repaired; a general, unknown at the beginning, had time to make himself known and to bring victory back to the standards. Today railways convey hour by hour countless masses of men to the decisive point. Within a fortnight the issue of the campaign is decided, and all is won. It is indispensable therefore that the plan should be traced before the opening of hostilities, and at the same time that the superiority of the commander-in-chief should be so

recognised and accepted that every one should obey without hesitation and under all circumstances. With equal genius and equal forces the unity of an uncontested command offers far more decisive advantages than in former times. Germany has still Moltke, and in default of him, Blumenthal, they say. In fine, the German army now perhaps excels the armies of other states to a greater extent than even Napoleon I. at the very height of his power.

This pre-eminence which would lead an ambitious prince to extravagant enterprises, ought on the contrary to bind over a wise government to enjoy in peace the security that it derives from its strength. But the Germans are convinced of two things. First, that the other states, particularly France and Russia, having adopted the Prussian system, will soon be able to dispose of forces equal to those of Germany. Secondly, that when this hour shall come, Germany will be attacked at the first convenient moment, probably by those two states in alliance with one another. It is natural that the Germans, possessing this conviction, should wish to anticipate the danger that threatens them by acting while they still retain the superiority on which their safety depends.

This may seem hateful. But we must see things as they are. The conquest of Alsace is an inexorable cause of war between Germany and France. It is a duel to the death. He who does not slay is himself slain. One of the two foes struck the other down, and thinks he has disabled him. He was mistaken. Then seeing the vanquished recovering strength and arming himself with a sharper sword than that which played him false, the conqueror will be inclined to strike a second time, less he should in his turn succumb. It is childish to speak of magnanimity to a state which believes it has its very existence to defend. Those who govern Germany cannot help perceiving the danger. An alliance between France and Russia is indicated by the very nature of things, and if it does not yet exist, it is owing to the friendship that unites the Emperor Alexander to his uncle, the Emperor William. France in order to recover Alsace and her old frontier of the Rhine will concede to Russia all that she wishes in the East and on the Danube. Germany, on the contrary, can cede to Russia neither the Principalities nor Turkey, without giving up at the same time all the Slaves, that is, the centre of Europe, including Bohemia and Trieste. The saying of Frederick II. still remains true:—"We cannot favour the designs of Russia; for on the very day when she is at Constantinople, she would enter Königsberg."

General Fadeeff has admirably pointed out the changes wrought by the events of 1870 in the European situation.¹ Russia is hence-

(1) *Aperçu de la question d'orient*, par le général Rostilav Fadeeff.—General Fadeeff *Russlands Kriegsmacht und Kriegspolitik*, übersetzt von J. Eckardt.

forth stronger, in the sense that, Germany and France having both equally good reasons for coveting her alliance, she is the arbiter of peace and of the destinies of the European continent. But on the other hand, instead of being arrested in her expansion by the intermittent alliance between France and England, she has now in front of her the compact mass of the Germanic race. The maritime states could barely graze the remotest extremities of the Empire. Germany can smite it in the very heart. If she were victorious, a single campaign would bring her to St. Petersburg and Moscow; and, by a still more decisive stroke, she could restore Poland and defend its existence. A secret instinct warns Germans and Russians alike that a conflict will one day break out between them. The interest of the nations is to disarm, to live in peace, to interchange ideas and commodities, not shell and ball. But they are still insensate enough to suffer themselves to be dragged, nay, to march with enthusiasm, into fratricidal strife.

France for her part does not at this moment wish for war. She is wholly absorbed in the work of her political reorganization. It was contrary to the truth to accuse her of seeking to trouble the peace of Europe. But it would be useless to deny that the day when she shall believe herself strong enough to recover Alsace, she will try. This being notorious and avowed, it is a grave danger for her to push on the reconstruction of the army with so much haste. We can hardly hope that Germany will wait until her enemy is completely ready for the attack. If the danger grows serious, she will unquestionably be the first to move. For this reason many sober Frenchmen are of opinion that France would do better to imitate Prussia after Jena, to reduce her army so as to take away all pretext for an attack, and at the same time to reconstitute her whole military establishment, slowly and beginning at the foundations. Nations may await their hour; they do not die.

Were the notes recently sent to Belgium by Germany in themselves a warning to the Belgian ministry and to the clericals of France, or a serious threat against the independence of this little neutral country? It does not seem likely that the Germans want to commit this odious attempt brutally to seize a state that for forty years has governed itself with wisdom, and has done the whole continent the great service of proving that all the English liberties are capable of being acclimatised. The journals beyond the Rhine, it is true, go on charging with a disturbing persistency that the Belgians are the enemies of Germany. But the German government must know perfectly well how untrue this is. As M. Malou, the minister of finances, observed, if there are in Belgium newspapers and a party which do not approve the policy of Prussia, the other party and its organs show themselves all the more in sympathy with that policy.

The French language, the multiplicity of dealings, the same reading, the same laws, lead to numerous points of contact and likeness between the French and the Belgians. On the other hand, Belgium never forgets what she owes to Germany. The Belgians hold in equal esteem their neighbours on the south and their neighbours in the east. But nothing could induce them to desire union either with Germany or with France. They are deeply attached to their independence, they are sincerely proud of it, and they would defend it with all the energy of the most ardent and devoted patriotism.

Belgian neutrality would render an immense service to each of her two neighbours in case of a conflict between them. Belgium covers against French invasion both the Rhine and Westphalia which is nearly defenceless. It covers, therefore, the direct road to Berlin. On the other side it protects against a German attack the rich provinces of the north, where General Faidherbe succeeded in raising a complete army in 1870. The violent seizure of Belgium without any just cause of offence would raise the indignation of Europe to such a point that no power can have any interest in braving it. France, to attack Germany, may have to pass through Belgium, so as to avoid the formidable quadrilateral of Metz, Strasburg, Coblenz, and Mainz. But Germany, to enter France, has only to open her strong places. It can only be at the close of a great war that Belgium may be included in a great readjustment of the European map, according to a plan which a German statesman explained to me. "Suppose," said he, "that we were to come victorious out of a new duel with France, what could we do to place ourselves in a position of definite security? Take the rest of Lorraine and Champagne? An absurd solution, contrary to the nature of things, and one that could have no ultimate chance of lasting. We should be taking in populations of different origin and different speech, contrary to the principle of nationalities which now regulates the reconstitution of states. Our territory would have on that side an impossible configuration. History on the contrary offers us a solution at once natural, solid, and traditional, and you know that the Germans set much store by historic tradition. We should restore the circle of Burgundy, one of the great territorial divisions of the old German Empire. In other words we should reconstruct the collection of provinces possessed by Charles the Bold, and we should reattach them to the German Empire, without stripping them of their autonomy."

Certainly the Belgians would not be ready to give any consent to such an aggrandizement as this. It would cost them both their independence and their tranquillity, and they would resist it with all their might. Nevertheless, it may be that here is a danger for the future. We cannot think without a shudder of the desperate

struggles that would assuredly be provoked by an attempt to force such a reconstruction of the past into the conditions and circumstances of the present.

III.

It remains for us now to examine what would probably be the conduct of the different states in case of a new conflict between France and Germany.

(1.) The attitude of Russia depends on the will of the Emperor. Now the Emperor seems to be a friend of peace and humanity. Everything proves it—his domestic reforms, his attitude in the midst of European complications, his truly disinterested and beneficent intervention in favour of a mitigation of the usages of war. He appears desirous of confining himself, and rightly, to developing the resources of his immense territory, without seeking to enlarge it by senseless conquests. If he had been ambitious, he could in 1866 and 1870 have got a higher price for his alliance than the recovery of his freedom of action in the Black Sea. The English have looked suspiciously on his annexations in the Khanates beyond the Sea of Aral. But these annexations were brought about on the same grounds as led England herself to make, one after another, far more numerous and important annexations in India. The Emperor Alexander not desiring aggrandizement in Europe, it is not likely that Germany could obtain his concurrence, or even his acquiescence, by means of a territorial concession. Nor would he look with favour on any new addition to the German Empire, which would certainly alarm public opinion in Russia. But would he go so far as to oppose it by arms, and to uphold France notwithstanding the affection which unites him to the Emperor William, and notwithstanding his thoroughly German sympathies? What happens in the West may seem insignificant in comparison with the future reserved for Russia. The Russian Empire already counts twice as many inhabitants as the German Empire, and before another hundred years are gone it will count 200,000,000—which, thanks to the railways, will deliver to it the whole of Asia, and probably, moreover, thanks to the idea of Pan Slavism, the half of Europe.

It is said that the Czarewitch is not fond of the Germans, and that he would be very glad to see his father follow a different policy from that which has prevailed hitherto. If this were true, it would be a reason the more why Germany should act before a change takes place that would be unfavourable to her. On the whole, Russia seems resolutely attached to the maintenance of peace and the *status quo*, and possibly would even go so far as to defend it by arms.

(2.) In Austria divergent tendencies are in presence of one another and balance one another. The Emperor and the army have not forgotten Sadowa. From the correspondence between Count Beust and M. de Gramont concerning the promises of co-operation given to the Emperor Napoleon, it resulted that if that co-operation failed, it was due first to the prompt and decisive successes of the German armies, and secondly to the attitude of Russia. The reconciliation with this power, and the alliance of the three Emperors, has been for Austria a fortunate guarantee of security and strength, and it owes some gratitude for this to Prussia. But the ingratitude of Austria is a proverb, and we must confess that ingratitude is natural to states in the "struggle for existence." The obstacle to an attack directed against Germany would not come from there. Only the intelligent and guiding part of the German Austrians, who are anti-clerical and convinced of the necessity of leaning on the greater Germany, would fail to approve a war against that Germany. The Hungarians would be as little anxious for it, seeing that they are now the masters in the dual empire, while the return to the situation, as it was before 1866, would subject them anew to the preponderance of the German element. On the other hand, the high Catholic nobility, the Tyrolese, the clergy, and all the populations under them, would throw themselves with enthusiasm into a war against the heretics of the north, the persecutors of the Church. Prussia overthrown, the crown of the Empire of Germany would pass to Catholic Austria, and the fruit of the victories of Gustavus Adolphus would be definitively lost. On the whole, the opponents of war would be, if not more numerous, still more powerful than the others, because they have the upper hand in the Chambers and in the towns. But we cannot too thoroughly master this truth, that on the continent the sovereign may plunge into war in spite of the most decided opposition in the nation. We saw this in Prussia in the war of 1866, which was unpopular to the highest degree in every class of society. The sovereign gives the order of march. The army, inured to passive obedience, attacks the enemy. The conflict once begun, what can the country do but defend itself? The most declared enemy of war must abandon opposition, under pain of betraying the national cause. Thus, then, in default of victories as rapid and as crushing as those of 1870, Germany would have to count on the hostility of Austria, if she were to insist on increasing her own power, and lessening that of France.

(3.) They report a good saying of Prince Bismarck's to a French diplomatist. "We shall both of us," he said, "pay ardent court to Italy, but you will see that she will never let herself be seduced by either the one or the other." The rational policy of the Peninsula is summed up in this. Italy owes gratitude to France, who gave her

Milan, and to Prussia who allowed her to take Venice and Rome, and to complete her unity. To ally herself with one or other would be an act of ingratitude without aim and without compensation. Germany may promise her Nice, Savoy, and the Italian Tyrol, but these revindications, which the Italians are too sensible to concern themselves much about, would not be worth the hazard and the cost of a war with France and Austria. Italy has need of peace to restore her finances, and to permit the continuance of the magnificent industrial, literary, and scientific development which is now transforming that fortunate land. The advanced party inclines to Prussia from hatred of the papacy, and fear of French legitimism. The moderates lean towards France by tradition and common memories. The majority of the Italians would naturally prefer the French to the Germans, if this sympathy were not counterbalanced by the conviction that a monarchy in France would be forced to intervene in favour of the Pope, in order to make sure of the support of the clergy. The danger is so distant that Italy might at this moment reduce her war establishment, and especially her navy, which is in any case useless and insufficient. She would in this way decisively mark her intention to remain neutral, and would have a good reason for taking part in no conflict.

Italy is admirably placed for preserving her neutrality. Cut off from the rest of Europe by the Alps, she possesses almost the advantages of an island. The natural limits agree nearly exactly with the ethnographical frontiers. None of her neighbours any longer think of taking any of her soil or of invading it. Austria is definitively reconciled with Italy, and if she dreams of any extension, it is no longer towards the south, but eastwards or northwards. France, already embarrassed by the possession of Nice, will never think of annexing Genoa or Turin. Italy is as isolated as Spain, and unlike Spain she has no colonies to keep down or to defend. Once the question of the temporal power definitively settled, she has no longer an enemy to fear. The Italians have shown so much sagacity in the conduct of affairs at home and abroad that they will not be likely to throw themselves into a fray where they would have much to lose and nothing to gain.

(4.) It remains to examine what England would do. Because England did not take up arms in 1863 to defend Denmark, nor in 1870 to fly to the succour of France, many people think on the continent that she is devoted to peace at any price, and they talk of pusillanimity and abdication. A few Englishmen are weak enough to feel these superficial judgments. Lately even it has been truly laughable to see with what proud satisfaction the newspapers have sung the praises of Lord Derby, because, say they, his decided attitude preserved the peace of Europe. It would seem as if they were ashamed

of the too long abstention of their country. And yet neither in 1864 nor 1870 could England have acted otherwise than she did. It is truly amazing to see certain writers express their regret at this. If England had declared war against Germany in defence of Denmark, she would have had to act in concert with France. Now Napoleon had been simple enough to announce that he must have a territorial compensation for a conflict in which he would have to meet the shock of the whole of Germany, including Austria. If victorious, therefore, he would take the Rhine frontier, comprising Belgium. How could England, at war with her old continental allies, have withstood this? Thus in case of success, she would be sacrificing Belgium for the sake of preserving Schleswig to Denmark. Would that have been rational policy? Again, it may be said now, that Napoleon was well advised in shrinking from the struggle. Prussia had already the needle-gun and her rapidity of mobilisation. She would have been supported by the armies of the Confederation and of Austria, which would have marched with enthusiasm against the hereditary foe on behalf of the German fatherland. In presence of such overwhelming forces, how in the name of common sense could 40,000 Englishmen, however brave, have saved France from a catastrophe?

In 1870 England, understanding the danger that overhung Belgium, concluded a treaty with France and Prussia for the defence of Belgian neutrality against any power that might violate it. This was not abstention. It was the sword of Great Britain, held ready to start from the scabbard, to protect the little state whose existence she had guaranteed. This twofold alliance was in reality directed against Napoleon, who all through his reign had dreamed of this conquest of Belgium, and the Benedetti Treaty had just made this unmistakably evident. In 1868, when on the occasion of the resumption of the Luxemburg railway by the French Eastern Company, Napoleon had been on the point of acting against Belgium, it was the energetic opposition of England that forced him to draw back, and in 1867 it was owing to her intervention that the Luxemburg affair ended peaceably. England, therefore, has succeeded in defending on the continent the only interest for which in case of need she would be called upon to take up arms.

In France she has been reproached with not having helped her old ally of the Crimea after Sedan. But as soon as the Prussian victories had assured her what she had aimed at when the war broke out, in other words the maintenance of Belgian neutrality, how could she turn against the very State whose success she had been obliged to hope for? War is so horrible a thing that no nation in its senses ought ever to undertake it save under absolute necessity. With what precise object would England have gone to war with

Germany, her traditional ally? What was she to require, and what could she have got? No party, no serious statesman, would have consented to take the responsibility of a declaration of war against Germany, at the risk of increasing still further the exigencies of Russia. And let us not forget again, that the fall of Napoleon III. and the events of 1871 brought an evident gain to England. They removed her definitely away from those costly panics to which the armaments of France gave rise periodically. The French navy was the only one that could at certain moments have had any chance against the British navy, or could have made the Admiralty uneasy. For the future France would have to devote all her resources to her army, and consequently would neglect her fleet. When all sources of disquiet disappeared on the side of France, the insular security of Great Britain was complete, for the danger of the future German fleet cannot yet be taken into actual account. The preponderance of Germany perhaps diminishes in certain cases some of the influence and activity that England might have exercised on the continent. But on the other side it offers a guarantee for the interest which the English think they have in defending the East. The stronger Germany is, the less inclined will she be to offer compensation to Russia. The more she believes herself in need of Russian support, the more will she be drawn on to pay handsomely for it.

If we examine events closely for the last half century, we shall remain convinced that the policy of England has been rational as well as humane, steady, and clear-sighted. We can only reproach her with two mistakes; her attitude towards the United States during the War of Secession, and her way of conducting the Crimean War. The Crimean War had no result beyond giving prestige to Napoleon III. and enabling him to baptize with sounding names bridges, boulevards, and generals. The war was begun without reason, and ended without goal; directed without any plan of ensemble, and closed without prevision of the future. What have the English got by it, save the graves at Sebastopol and the monument in Pall Mall? If there was a wish seriously to arrest the aggrandizement of Russia, you should, according to Prince Bismarck's energetic expression, have made a war *à fond* and thrust her back beyond the Dnieper, by dragging Austria into the struggle. Modern war is too serious a thing and causes too much suffering to our industrial societies, for it to be made lightly, as though it were no more than a sort of tournament. In all the Franco-German complications, in 1863, 1866, 1867, 1868, and 1870, England never had the least reason for drawing the sword. She acted or abstained from acting as humanity and her own interest rightly understood happened to prescribe. It is mere absurdity to say that she has

fallen from her greatness of old time, because she has not gone to war without good reason.

There are two causes for which England would take up arms: Belgium and Holland, first, and next, Turkey and Persia. The maintenance of equilibrium in the East is still an invariable tradition of her policy, and the preservation of the independence of Belgium and Holland touches her still more closely. She has guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium, and would not allow her signature to be protested. The possession of the ports of the Scheldt and of the Meuse by a great continental power would drive England to such an augmentation of her armaments as would cost more than the war necessary to resist it. Antwerp is the necessary point of debarkation for the English, and its gigantic fortifications have been constructed solely to preserve it to her. Finally—a less serious but perhaps more decisive motive—the English would seize with eagerness an opportunity of proving by the defence of a good cause that they have preserved their old valour and warlike prowess. Even if England were alone, she would not hesitate to begin the struggle, because she is able to sustain it for a great length of time without serious peril to herself. People are mistaken if they think England powerless, because she can only throw some 40,000 or 50,000 men on to the continent. It is true that her means of attack are comparatively less effective than at the beginning of the century, now that the great European states have more than a million of men under arms, and the disembarkation of troops, which in former days hardly succeeded except in Spain, would no longer be feasible or useful save at Antwerp. But, what makes England formidable, as it did of yore the little republic of the United Provinces,—she may make herself the active centre of a coalition. She has money, the command of the seas, and prestige. Having nothing to fear at home, she may prolong the struggle and seek on all hands to raise up enemies against the power that she wishes to resist, and such enemies she will never fail to discover. England at last vanquished Napoleon I., sovereign master as he was of all Europe, simply because she had the power of keeping up the struggle against him for fifteen years, while the continental states were crushed in a single campaign. Napoleon III., with this lesson before his eyes, never ventured to brave the hostility of England: *timor Angliæ initium sapientiæ*. But for that, in 1866 before Sadowa, he would have taken Belgium without there being anything on the continent to stay his hand. But England, allied with Germany, would speedily have made him let go. He understood this, and did not wish to expose himself to a new Waterloo.¹ The study of the past, as

(1) Formerly people placed Napoleon III. too high, and now they place him too low. His designs were well conceived, but indecision in their execution turned them against

well as of the actual situation, proves clearly that England quite alone would be more powerless than she used to be, but that in fact she has never been more formidable, because being at peace within her own borders, and now that she is reconciled to America, she may become the centre of a truly redoubtable coalition, which there would be very little difficulty in forming in the midst of the fierce rivalries that are fermenting in modern Europe.

In case of a conflict, in which direction would she lean? At this moment the friendliness between France and England is closer than it ever was. The French seem to understand that they were wrong in their accusation of their former ally in 1870, seeing that everything combined to forbid her to take any part in a war which was undertaken in spite of her, and at bottom against her. So cordial an understanding between two nations who can do so much for the progress of civilisation is a great blessing, but do not let us remain under any illusions. Save in the case of Germany wishing to annex the Low Countries, England, notwithstanding her sympathy for France, could not go with her. The reasons for this are evident.

To begin with, we must take account of historic facts when they present a certain continuity, because in such a case they are the result of natural necessities. Now England has always been the rival of France and the ally of Germany. If the principles of Free Trade and international brotherhood exercised the influence that ought to belong to them, these facts would be no more than a memory devoid of all actual meaning. Unfortunately, what is called political interest settles the policy of states, and this interest must one day divide France and England. No one in France at the present moment thinks of resuming the too famous Benedetti project. But suppose France victorious over Germany in a great war, whose theatre would have been, as we must anticipate, in the plains of Belgium, the French Government would be led almost by force to re-take the frontiers of the Rhine to maintain herself on a level with the German Empire as definitively constituted. France, again, instinctively seeks the Russian alliance, and the Russians incline almost universally towards France. Alliance between these two states is indicated by the nature of things, each of them being able to concede what the other seeks. Now a Franco-Russian alliance

him. His plan was to produce, in concert with Cavour and Bismarck, the unity of Italy, the unity of Germany, and that of France up to the Rhine. If he had come to a frank understanding with Italy and Germany, and had an army sufficiently prepared to ensure him his own share, he would have succeeded. But in Italy he shrank back for fear of the clergy; with Bismarck he finessed; and having ruined his army in Mexico, he was not ready at the right moment. During the war of 1870, which he did not desire, he contributed the only two sound ideas of the campaign—to leave Metz forthwith, and not to go to Sedan. Thus he was compromising his crown, but perhaps he was saving France. After all, however, as it was, his reign was a frightful scourge for the country which invited and upheld him.

means the abandonment of the East to Russia, and of the West to France. This would be a sacrifice of the two very interests which England is most firmly bent on defending. The defeat of Germany would have for its consequences the hegemony of Austria in the centre of Europe, and the triumph of ultramontanism on the continent, which the English, I suppose, can hardly desire. It is therefore probable that, save in one contingency, England, in spite of the distrusts and antipathies of the hour, would be forced to uphold Germany, if a general war were to break out. All would make that way—historic traditions, political interests, religious sympathies.

To sum up in a few words. A great change in the equilibrium of Europe cannot come about without provoking a series of wars, because the loser is always bent on recovering his ancient position. Every state which aspires to supremacy or which obtains it, ends sooner or later by finding a coalition in face of it. All history shows this. Germany sees that a coalition will form against her under the auspices of ultramontanism, and she is naturally disposed to anticipate it by being first in the field. Hence the danger of war which has just alarmed Europe, and which cannot be dispersed because it arises from the very situation. The position of Germany, dominant as she may be at this moment, is one of the most critical. If she acts without provocation, she will have against her the sentiment and perhaps the arms of the whole of Europe. If she waits, the danger will perhaps be just as great, and she will by that time have lost her present superiority. To extricate the new Empire from these shoals, those who have its destinies in their hands will need a great deal of prudence, moderation, and clear-sightedness, along with energy and decision in an emergency. In front of them the peace coalition has just risen up. Sooner or later will form against the war coalition. The struggle between the Papacy and the Empire will begin afresh, and who can predict the issue?

The means of avoiding the terrible shock that all the world foresees in the future, would perhaps be to make of Belgium, Luxemburg, Switzerland, and of Alsace restored to her own people, an independent zone, the neutrality of which, being guaranteed by Europe, would separate France and Germany by an insurmountable barrier, and would make a conflict all but impossible. But this is a dream so absolutely chimerical, that it is ridiculous to venture on the mere mention of it. There must still be many massacres before the nations reach a clear comprehension of these evident truths, that no state has any interest in augmenting its territory, and that the smallest countries are the happiest.

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