

AFTER THE WAR.

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One often hears the question: After the war, when passion has subsided, what shall we have to say to Germans—to an individual German? What will our men, our women have to say? What will our thought and feeling, our attitude be? We cannot exclude them all from our intercourse for ever; somewhere, sooner or later, individual English will come across individual Germans under conditions where some sort of intercourse will be imposed. Apart from old friendships that may survive the present shock, what treatment will an average Englishman accord an average German whom necessity, social or business, brings his way?

The answer, of course, will vary with individuals. So far as business is concerned, and for the most part, the merchant will buy and sell to the end of time where his profit lies, and, provided goods are sound and drafts are honoured, he is not concerned with the personal morality of his customer. Economic leagues of anti-German kind may hamper, even prevent such intercourse, but, speaking generally, business is impersonal. Socially, however—in the big sense "socially"—the answer is not easy. The question is a very pregnant one. There are some who will rise to the level of a great forgiveness possibly. And—there are others:

No matter how crushing the terms of peace we may be able to exact, nor how disastrous to Germany the material burden of eventual defeat, there are many who think that her severest punishment—adequately effective because the gods decree it—will lie in the treatment that for years to come the individual members of the allied nations will accord the individual Teuton whom they may be obliged to meet. Not that it will be treatment prompted necessarily by spite, by anger, least of all by desire for revenge, but that it must arise out of the conditions of the German soul which their method of making war, as well as their methods of preparing for war in time of peace, has so terribly laid bare.

The plain man cannot so easily purge his mind and memory of the loathing and horror that "frightfulness" has accumulated there; the failure of the ghastly policy (its material failure may be left to the naval and military experts) lies, in the truth that it is not worth while. Its destructive effect is temporary at best, its stupendous reaction is a lasting one. It is an offence against a Higher Command for which a just retribution must be exacted to the uttermost farthing.

And not the most easily paid of these said farthings may probably be those in current social use over the greater part of Europe when the war is over. They will be paid, they will be exacted, by individuals—even by those whom a loftier ideal persuades into the Christian attitude of forgiving and trying to forget. The name of Hun has been too thoroughly deserved. The individual of the Allied nations who meets a German will instinctively—whether with his mind, his body, or his soul—turn away. Win or lose, the Teuton will be disliked, distrusted; the uncivilised savagery of his Government will cling to him like the broad arrow of the convict's brand.

It was some weeks ago, in Montreux, that this probability first came home to me. The little neutral town was full of foreigners; there were French and Russians, Italians (it was before the declaration of war by Italy), and Poles, Belgians by the hundred, and many English; there were also contingents from the Argentine and Brazil, Chileans, Americans too—and there were Germans. I have lived much in Germany; they were what I call "nice Germans"—the learned, scholarly kind, mingled with the well-to-do middle class, all elderly, and nothing aggressively national about them anywhere. Montreux in the spring is a favourite resort with them; they came as usual. Fooling surprise that they chose a part of Switzerland that was outspokenly on the side of the Allies, whereas German-Swissers sympathised with their cause, the proprietor of a large restaurant enlightened me cynically enough with the explanation: "Parcequ'ici on mange mieux!" But it was the reciprocal attitude of these Germans and the other foreigners in the little neutral haven that I wished to mention chiefly—the way the former kept strictly to themselves, and the way the latter obviously avoided them. For all the foreigners, not only those of the fighting races, left them severely alone; no one would speak to them; no one, it seemed, wished to have dealings or intercourse with them even of the slightest kind. The Germans, always in the most comfortable hotels, remained apart; they sat in groups, they ate, they walked in groups. They read exclusively their own newspapers, or the newspapers of Zurich, Bâle, and Lucerne that were friendly to them; the "Gazette de Lausanne," or the "Tribune de Genève," so hostile to their country, they never opened. The women knitted all day long, the men talked eagerly—the anxiety on their faces struck me forcibly—across their table in the corner of the crowded hall and when anyone not German passed within earshot it was noticeable that they all talked—French!

It touched one's imagination as a foretaste of what must probably come on a bigger scale when the war is over and the nations are at peace again. To be sent to Coventry by the people of at least five important European countries, to be unable to indulge the strong love of travelling in these said five countries as before, would seem to promise a severe restriction that must guide the nation thus penalised towards a rather penetrating kind of introspection. The individual, surely, more than ever before, will ask himself the question: Why—and think upon the problem. But, will it touch him? Will he care? Will it teach him—anything?

The plain man could easily give the answer to that pregnant "Why?" But will the German listen? And, if he listens, will the meaning penetrate his unimaginative brain? At present, of course, his Government takes good care that he shall not have the opportunity to hear, much less to listen; but after the war there will be ample opportunities that no official "verboten" can prevent. There are some who think his hide may be penetrated then, that he will care, that he will even learn—in a way that material defeat could never compass, though material defeat and the consequent respect engendered is a necessary precursor of a greater open-mindedness to follow. For material defeat is physical and mental in its results, whereas "coventry," in the large sense, is spiritual in its effects. It may touch the soul in him. The essential cad, so fortified, so jubilant in him at the moment, will begin to wonder: "was it, after all, worth while—this frightfulness of ours?"

In a recent issue of the "Berliner Tageblatt" a certain Friedrich von Conring discusses the question: "Why is Germany so universally disliked?" Dismissing the usual answers ("envy born of rivalry, conduct of German travellers, our internal political structure, our want of sentiment," and the like), he finds the answer as follows: "This infinite hatred, in my opinion, simply originates in the fact that we have not known how to capture and satisfy the aspirations and the fancies of foreign peoples, and have not known how to work on their imagination." After suggest-

ing naively that this desired foreign love may be obtained by "the development of our artistic activities to a characteristic style of beauty, and its adoption and extension throughout the world," he concludes with the boastful doubt: "Whether, then, we shall win the love of foreign nations is a question which I dare not decide. Perhaps, however, when the time comes, we shall cease to trouble about it."

If this be a representative opinion it must appear that the German, after the war, will neither listen nor learn. For the "Kultur" whose world-wide adoption is here offered is not wanted; the "foreign nations" will none of it; the plain man does not want it. It is found wanting. It has been proved linked with frightfulness. A truer answer to his answer is easily given—that the world hates a cad. Frightfulness is caddishness; it is an entire absence of the sporting spirit so strong always in a "gentleman." The "gentleman" is a good loser; plays fair, scores a mean advantage. The cad does none of these things, thinking them childish weakness. He uses a knuckle-duster inside his gloves, plays tricks with the ground before the challenge is even out, keeps cunning devices up his sleeve to surprise his adversary. In a word, devoid of chivalry, he knows no rules, and glories in the fact as a legitimate source of strength. The list is a staggering one. Atrocities may be left out of the account on both sides, it being granted that an individual soldier in blind rage, or drunk, or in revenge may commit a dreadful act—it is the deliberate, thought-out, cold-blooded policy that has struck civilisation so cowardly a blow and staggered the feeling of the world. The crimes calculated calmly in time of peace! From the use of gas and liquid fire to poisonous shells and burning pitch the record passes on to rape, arson, slaughter of prisoners and non-combatants, and every conceivable savage horror. There is no principle in the international law of warfare which the Germans have not violated in order to produce their desired effect of terror. The order of General Stenger, commanding the 88th Brigade of German Infantry, dated, on August 26: "From and after to-day no more prisoners are to be taken. All prisoners are to be massacred. The wounded, whether with or without arms, are to be killed off. No living enemy must be left behind us." "French prisoners," records a soldier's captured diary, "who were severely wounded and could not get up received another bullet which put an end to them. These were the orders given to us."

Humanity resents, abhors a bully; dislikes, despises a cad, even when it fears him. One always comes back to the Man in the Street. What will Humanity's Man in the Street—the streets of five civilised nations—have to say to him? Has the genial, good-natured, sentimental German of sausage and sauerkraut, of beer "stein" and length pipe, gone for ever? Is he now become instead the cad of Europe, the outcast of the civilised world; and is he to remain so?

On this large scale the opinion of the plain man may produce a regenerating effect. The opinion of the individuals of five countries who know chivalry, who play the game, who fight in a nobler spirit, is a force to be reckoned with, at any rate. For the plain man stands for common sense, the great, wholesome average. What Tom, Dick, and Harry think has value, though individually Tom, Dick, and Harry may be of limited intelligence. Collectively they are important, and it is the collective sense that decides wars, elects Parliaments, kills certain taxes, judges a man as hero, statesman, fool, or—cad. In sheer numbers it is as the sand; it stands for countless millions; it was the French Revolution; to-day it is khaki, but khaki in five editions. Above racial prejudice, which may be narrow; above political bias, which may be petty; above any of the lesser divisions of mankind caused by creed, by temperament, by climate, this collective judgment of the world to-day—far more than merely of the Allies—condemns Germany's dishonour, resents her universal trickery, abhors her frightfulness. After the war the individual German, made aware of this heavy judgment, may discern the true answer to von Conring's question, and asking himself another question: "Was it worth while?" may find the answer to that, too—and learn a better way.