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## The Responsibility for the Great War

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## THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE GREAT WAR.

In the summer of 1914, when the Great War suddenly broke upon Europe, there was much perplexity and confusion of thought among neutral observers. Signs of a coming test of strength had been plentiful, but thus far they had proved false: diplomatic "crises" had been successfully handled; sabers had rattled but had remained in the sheath; "storm clouds" had failed to break. And now, almost without warning, the most malignant forces of civilization were loosened and the world war was a fact.

There was nothing in the European situation of that year that should "inevitably" have led to war. Armed conflicts usually come when statesmen, diplomats, and the controlling classes lack wisdom in dealing with real crises or when the ruling elements actually desire war. Justice sometimes demands warfare, but in 1914 justice was evidently not active in the councils of Central Europe. Neutral observers were soon in fair agreement that in August of that year a crime had been committed—the greatest crime in all the ages.

In their search for the criminal they received but slight help from the belligerent parties; all tried to load the responsibility for the war on the backs of their opponents. Soon after the outbreak, Count Andrassy, an eminent Hungarian statesman, in a book entitled "Whose Sin is the World War," placed the blame on Russia; England and France were responsible in a lesser degree. The Germans, however, were unwilling to accept Andrassy's dictum; they regarded England as the chief criminal and called fervently on the Almighty to join in punishing that wicked state. England in her turn found the responsibility in Berlin and poured forth her wrath upon the Kaiser as the symbol of Prussian power and perfidy.

Before many months the neutral world had come to feel that the burden of responsibility must ultimately be placed on one of these two powers, England or Germany. And, as the war developed, a constantly growing number came to feel that the guilt must be charged to the German government. It may, therefore, be worth while to review a few



outstanding facts of recent history, the fuller understanding of which has helped to drive mankind toward this conclusion.

One of the chief controlling factors in British foreign policy in the second half of the nineteenth century was a deep-seated fear of Russia. Spanning the vast plain from the Baltic Sea to Bering Strait, a distance of nearly 5,000 miles, and controlling the destinies of more than 150,000,000 people, the Russian Empire made a tremendous impression on statesmen two generations ago. But as the century marked its close it gradually dawned upon Western Europe that Russia was not able to play the part that she had chosen. The outcome of the Russo-Japanese war convinced the world that there was much clay in the feet of the Russian giant. In England the dread of "the Bear" passed away, but it was replaced by another fear—the fear of Germany.

The belief that Germany might some day become a menace to British power began to find expression about thirty years ago, and had its origin in competition and rivalry, of which three forms developed: commercial, naval and imperialistic.

### I. *Commercial Rivalry.*

The commercial rivalry originated during the eighties, when Germany was beginning her wonderful development along industrial lines. Before this time England had largely provided the world with manufactured products; now Germany appeared with a demand for a large share of the world's commerce; her merchants even began to sell their wares in the markets of the British Isles. Their success irritated the English, and parliament (1887) passed an act requiring all goods of German origin to be clearly marked "made in Germany." This law did not work out as was intended, however, for the Germans seized on the phrase and began to use it for trade-mark purposes.

For a time it was feared in England that the German merchants might succeed in their efforts to obtain the leadership in the world's trade; but English commerce soon began to show a parallel growth, especially during the five years just preceding the war. England was apparently on the way to regain her commercial supremacy—to the great disgust of the industrial barons of Germany. There was in 1914 no reason why England should wish to risk a war for the destruction of German commerce.



## II. *Naval Rivalry.*

The naval rivalry followed the economic expansion of Germany and was in a measure an outgrowth of the same. Germany was building a large merchant marine, and there is a superstition abroad that such a fleet must have the support and protection of a great and efficient navy. Twenty-five years ago certain influences in Germany began to agitate for a strong naval armament. In 1897 Admiral Tirpitz became the chief of naval affairs. It was his purpose to develop a German navy so strong that no other power would care to attack it. In this he was supported by a powerful organization, the "Navy League," which the Krupps helped to finance, and which in a few years could count its membership by the hundred thousands.

It has long been the policy of England to maintain only a small standing army, but to keep afloat a navy as large and as efficient as any other two navies: this is known as the two-power standard. The character of the British empire necessitates such a policy: nine-tenths of the subjects of Britain live outside Europe, most of them thousands of miles away. To maintain communication with her dependencies over the sea and to provide for their prompt and adequate defense, England needs a large navy.

But now comes Germany with a proposal to maintain the greatest and most efficient army in the world and to add to it a navy that would rival that of England and perhaps ultimately surpass it. If the British government were to maintain the two-power standard, more English ships must be built; and now began a dangerous competition in ship construction which continued to the beginning of the war. This meant vast expenditures of money and consequently high taxation. This led again to much complaint, especially in England where the government was anxiously seeking methods by which to finance certain important social reforms, such as national insurance of workmen and pensions for the aged poor.

Much has been said in recent years about the menace of Prussian militarism, to which the Germans have replied by calling attention to English navalism. A navy, however, is essentially a defensive weapon; its use in offensive warfare is narrowly limited and ordinarily requires the coöperation of an army. A great military force, on the other hand, can often be used effectively without the support of a fleet, as German warfare in the present conflict has abundantly proved. Militarism is a



greater menace than navalism; but a combination of militarism and navalism, as planned by the war lords of Berlin, is the greatest menace to the world's peace imaginable.

About 1901 the English people began to appreciate the dangers of the new situation. The Boer War, which had just been ended, had revealed the difficulties of imperial defense; it had also revealed the fact that England had no real friend among the great powers. The "splendid isolation" of which a prime minister had boasted a dozen years earlier did not look attractive then, more particularly because across the North Sea an unfriendly rival was developing a wonderful naval establishment, and England suddenly remembered that she had no fleet with which to match and to meet the battleships of Germany riding at anchor only 200 miles away.

In the decade before the war two great problems lay before the English government on the side of the admiralty; to maintain the two-power standard and to establish a North Sea fleet.

The government began by forming an alliance with Japan, according to the terms of which the latter power should take over the protection of British interests in the North Pacific. This would release a number of British men-of-war, which could be brought home and assigned to duty in the North Sea.

Another important step was the appointment of Sir John Fisher to a high office in the British admiralty. Sir John was more than a mere administrator; he was a real seaman and appreciated the possibilities of naval development. He rebuilt and reorganized the British navy, beginning the work by assigning 180 ships to the official junk heap. But John Fisher's activities were not all destructive; he directed the building of a new battleship which was larger, swifter, and carried heavier guns than any other battleship afloat. This was the famous *Dreadnought*, which was completed for service in 1906.

The launching of the *Dreadnought* produced a sensation in the naval world. All the older battleships were suddenly relegated to second place. The other great powers immediately felt that they, too, must have dreadnoughts. Incidentally the launching of John Fisher's new man-of-war postponed the great European conflict for eight years. The Germans had cut a canal across Schleswig between the North and Baltic seas so as to facilitate naval movements and to provide a refuge for their warships and merchantmen at times of great danger. Now it



was discovered that the Kiel Canal was too narrow to accommodate battleships of the dreadnought type. The German government at once proceeded to enlarge this waterway and on July 1, 1914, the work was completed. A month later the Kaiser called out his forces, and the peace of Europe was at an end.

### III. *Imperialistic Rivalry.*

In its early stages the Great War was a struggle for empire; the Germans hoped to win colonies and dependencies; Great Britain wished to retain what she already possessed. England did not covet any German territory; on the other hand Prussian agitators and publicists were constantly calling on the English "land-grabber" to disgorge, not for the benefit of subject Asiatics or Africans, but in the interest of Prussian capitalists. Though many Englishmen felt that the expansion of England had already passed desirable limits, they were averse to hauling down the British flag on the demands of a rival and apparently unfriendly power. So the Briton set his teeth and informed the Prussians that "what we hold we shall keep."

For more than three hundred years the English have been engaged in colonizing ventures. Not even a German historian in his serious moments would care to deny that the building of the British Empire has brought great benefits not only to England, but to the cause of civilization throughout the world. The German government began to take a half-hearted interest in colonial expansion only thirty-five years ago. While the English Puritans were settling New England and laying the foundations of the present United States, Germany was fighting the Thirty-Years' War. While the English East India Company was establishing British power in India, Frederick II and the Prussians were engaged in the presumably laudable effort to deprive the Hapsburg dynasty of one of its choicest provinces. While Englishmen were settling Canada and Australia and making those great regions securely British, the two great German states, Prussia and Austria, were occupied with the far more spectacular and congenial task of slaughtering Poland and dividing the carcass with the Russian Czar. While David Livingstone and Cecil Rhodes were exploring and winning South Africa for England, Germany was busy strengthening herself in Europe and incidentally trying to impose *Kultur* on sundry Danes and Frenchmen who had become unwilling subjects of the Kaiser a few years before.



When the Fatherland at last was ready to consider territorial expansion outside Europe, the desirable regions had long been appropriated. The territories that fell to Germany in the "scramble for Africa" in the eighties were not such as would gladden the Prussian imperialist, and he looked with longing eyes toward Egypt, India, and South Africa,—but there was the Union Jack!

In 1901, however, Paul Rohrbach, a German publicist, sketched and put forth a plan that looked highly promising; it was to utilize in modern fashion the ancient Persian road and trade route from the Bosphorus to the Persian Gulf. The project was to build a railway from Constantinople through Asia Minor and Mesopotamia to the mouth of the "rivers of Babylon." Ostensibly this railway was to be the means for the development of the Near East; and to this the English had no serious objections. But as they reflected on the possibilities of the Baghdad railway scheme British statesmen began to feel somewhat uneasy.

(1). East of the Persian Gulf in the Middle and Far East lives one-half of the population of the entire world. The European trade of this vast region, which in recent years has been carried in large measures in English ships through the Suez Canal, would, in part at least, be diverted to this far shorter railway route.

(2). An important branch of the Baghdad system was to run south through Syria to the neighborhood of the Isthmus of Suez. In a war with Germany this might prove extremely important as it would endanger the English possession of the Suez Canal. If the Germans and Turks should seize the isthmus, the Germans would possess both of the two short routes to the Orient, the Baghdad Railway and the Suez Canal.

(3). The Syrian branch of the Baghdad Railway could easily be connected with the terminus of the Cape to Cairo Railway, which the English were building in eastern Africa. It might be an advantage to be able to travel by rail from Cape Town to Hamburg, but the English feared that the advantage would be chiefly with the Germans.

(4). It also seemed possible that somewhere on the Persian Gulf at the terminal of the Baghdad Railway the Germans might develop a naval station sufficiently strong to endanger English supremacy in India, which is only four days' sailing distant. India has long been and still remains the central fact in the British Empire. It is the richest and most populous dependency in all the world and the English are naturally not disposed to surrender India to the Germans.



The German expansionists, who talk glibly of *Kultur* in Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, and China, doubtless based their hopes largely on the Baghdad project. And then suddenly the dream vanished. It was learned that the chief of an Arab tribe on the shores of the Persian Gulf, the sheikh of Koweit, had, even before the Germans had arranged to build their railway, placed his territories under the protection of England. And the port of Koweit was the only available terminal for the great road!

The English did not come into these regions as interlopers. For three hundred years the Union Jack has waved over the Persian Gulf. For three hundred years the English navy has policed its waters and given trade what security it has been able to enjoy. The Union Jack was there even before the Turkish Crescent appeared in the Persian Gulf; but the English annexed no territory; they were in those waters in the interest of trade only.

British imperialism is not wholly altruistic; and yet, when it is compared with the imperialistic policies of other nations, it reveals a remarkably unselfish spirit. England does not tax her colonies; the taxes raised in Canada, Australia, or India are spent in and for the colony that pays the tax. What England wants in the Orient is an opportunity to trade on the same terms that are granted to other nations. She seeks no monopoly for herself nor does she discriminate in her own favor by means of protective tariffs. It may be said in passing that the Germans are not able to understand the spirit of British imperialism; to them it is incontestable evidence that the "shop-keeper" nation is an inefficient and inferior race.

#### IV. *The Entente.*

During the decade when the German expansionists were preparing to challenge British power in the Orient, the English diplomats were seeking to establish friendly relations with other powers. The alliance with Japan (1902) has already been noted. More important were the understandings with France (1904) and with Russia (1907) which became the basis of the *Triple Entente*.

There was no real hostility between France and England in 1904, but the feeling was not wholly cordial and in certain parts of the world the English and the French were keen rivals. They had come near to collision in central Africa where French Soudan jostles English Soudan.



But M. Delcassé, the French foreign minister, felt that with the German enemy gaining yearly in strength France could not afford to be on unfriendly terms with England. Negotiations were opened with the English foreign office, which resulted in a settlement known as the *entente cordiale*. France gave England a quitclaim deed to Egypt while England on her part promised not to interfere with the plans of France with regard to Morocco. Other questions were also taken up and settled to the satisfaction of both parties.

In 1907 England, to the great astonishment of Europe, came to a similar "cordial understanding" with Russia. As noted above, English statesmen had long feared the steady expansion of Russian territory. In spite of her length of coast line, however, Russia was not favorably situated with respect to over-seas trade. It was believed, therefore, that the Muscovites had an ambition to force their way to the ocean on three sides: northwestward into northern Norway to an ice-free port on the Atlantic; southward through the Turkish Straits to the Mediterranean; southeastward through upper India to the Indian Ocean.

With the passing of this fear it became possible to arrange certain limits in Asia within which the contracting parties agreed to confine their operations. Among the arrangements was the much condemned partition of Persia into "spheres of influence." On the British side this transaction was entered into with honorable intentions toward Persia and perhaps in part from a fear that the German menace, which was creeping forward along the Baghdad route, might continue its march eastward along the Persian Gulf.

The Germans professed to see in these negotiations not an effort to maintain the balance of power and to secure the interests of England, but a diplomatic offensive, a policy of "encirclement," directed against Germany to defeat her ambitions and to strangle her economic development. Two men were credited with the chief responsibility for this policy: Edward VII, the crafty intriguer who traveled from court to court for the purpose of stirring up enemies against the lovers of peace in Potsdam; and Sir Edward Grey, the English secretary of state for foreign affairs, who sat in his secluded office in Westminster devising means to ensnare naive and unsophisticated diplomats.

To one who is not a German the policy of encirclement is by no means evident and for several reasons seems to be a creature of Prussian imagination.



(1). The Prussian theory credits King Edward with greater abilities than the English people were able to discover in His Genial Majesty. It is true that the king had a wide acquaintance in royal circles, but it is not likely that his influence with foreign governments was very great.

(2). The entente had its origin in France rather than in England; the statesman most responsible for the *entente cordiale* was Delcassé.

(3). Sir Edward Grey was not in office in 1904 and had nothing to do with the understanding with France. The negotiations on the English side were carried on by Lord Lansdowne, whose intentions were surely not to provoke war or even resentment. Lord Lansdowne was in the war office during the Boer War and did not come out of that conflict with much credit. It was the same Lord Lansdowne who some months ago wrote a letter in which he seemed to favor "peace by discussion."

(4). When Sir Edward Grey came into office in 1905, he continued the policy of his predecessor and strove to establish friendly relations with as many European powers as possible. He came to an understanding with Russia and succeeded in making certain important agreements with Italy and Spain respecting English interests in the Mediterranean Sea. In 1914 he was even on the point of reaching a cordial understanding with Germany.

(5). From 1905 to 1914 the government of England was administered by a cabinet of a Liberal-Radical type, several members of which had strong leanings toward pacifism. Two of the ablest ministers, Lord Morley and John Burns, resigned in August, 1914, rather than agree to make war on Germany. Another member, Lord Haldane, was even under suspicion as being too friendly to Germany. The cabinet as a whole was pledged to enact a great program of social reforms, and the achievements of the Asquith ministry in this direction are surely notable. It was a government that gave nearly all its energies to domestic affairs and was deaf to appeals for a larger army and militaristic legislation.

(6). English sentiment during this decade was—we may safely affirm it—overwhelmingly for peace. There has never been much jingoism in the Liberal ranks and the Unionists had come out of the Boer War in a very chastened mood.

During the same period Germany displayed a spirit that was anything but pacific. In 1907 the English government suggested that the



subject of a general reduction of armaments be discussed at the second Hague Conference; the Kaiser promptly replied that in that case he would have nothing to do with the conference. The following year King Edward visited his imperial nephew and proposed that England and Germany should cease their competition in the building of war ships, but to no purpose. The Kaiser "avowed his intention to go to war rather than submit to such a thing."<sup>1</sup> The King returned to the subject in 1909, but without success. Lord Haldane was sent to Berlin on a similar mission in 1912; and in 1913 Winston Churchill suggested that the two countries should declare "a naval holiday"; but results were not forthcoming, and the two governments continued to build more and larger ships. In 1911 the Kaiser created a crisis in Morocco, which happily found a peaceful outcome. In 1913 the Reichstag voted large additions to the German army. Various suggestions looking toward the arbitration of disputes were made, by our own government among others, but Berlin would not listen. And during the whole period a series of chauvinistic and abusive books and pamphlets came from the German presses in which England was characterized as the rival and enemy which must be dealt with at the earliest opportunity, whether the Kiel Canal were finished or not.<sup>2</sup>

#### V. *The Eve of the War.*

Time came, however, when those responsible for governmental action in Berlin felt less inclined to provoke England. Naval competition with the island kingdom looked hopeless, and von Tirpitz finally concluded that Germany need not be disturbed if England should build sixteen warships to her own ten. A timid, cautious man of rather limited abilities, von Bethmann-Hollweg, had come into the chancellorship, and he even began to hope for better relations with the English. Accordingly, in 1912, he sent to England as German ambassador, Karl Max, Prince Lichnowsky, a Silesian nobleman who was not without successful diplomatic experience and was known to favor an understanding with England and Russia. In Westminster the new ambassador found Sir Edward Grey anxious to accomplish the same purpose, and the two men proceeded to discuss the terms of a new "cordial understanding."

<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Bernadotte E. Schmitt, *England and Germany*, p. 184.

<sup>2</sup>Albrecht Wirth in a book on "German foreign policies," (1912), favored a war for Morocco. "They say we must wait for a better moment. Wait for the deepening of the Kiel Canal, for our naval program to have taken full effect," etc. *Conquest and Kultur* (1918), p. 117.



Since von Tirpitz had accepted the naval ratio of ten to sixteen, there remained only two matters that needed serious consideration: the Baghdad Railway and Germany's demand for colonial possessions. On both these points the negotiators seem to have reached satisfactory agreements.

(1). England agreed that the Germans might extend the Baghdad Railway to Basra, a point about 70 miles from the Persian Gulf. From Basra to the Gulf the road was to be built and controlled by the English. This left almost the whole of the great river valley to German capitalists and engineers. In return the Germans agreed to recognize the rights of earlier English investments in this region.

(2). Portugal still had important colonial possessions in East and West Africa which the Germans coveted. The Portuguese had held these for four centuries, but had done very little to develop them and might find it expedient to sell them. Sir Edward Grey could not dispose of these colonies, but he agreed that, in case Portugal should wish to sell them to Germany or ask Germany to assist in developing them, England would offer no objections.

These agreements were made, but the treaties were never signed. Sir Edward Grey insisted that the agreements must be made public; Berlin demanded that they be kept secret. Finally, in July, 1914, the Germans concluded that the treaties might be of value and agreed to Sir Edward's terms; but it was then too late.

Meanwhile a spirit of dissatisfaction and wrath had descended upon the ruling classes in Germany. To the earlier chauvinism, bigotry, and lust for territorial expansion there was now added a painful sense of humiliation and defeat. The Fatherland, though destined, as the Prussians believed, to direct and reshape the world, found its aims and ambitions foiled or balked at every turn. The Morocco venture (1911) had brought nothing but disappointment. In the First Balkan War the Turk, now a friend of Germany, had been disastrously beaten. In the second Balkan War, Bulgaria, for whom the Central Powers had hoped a victory, was defeated (1913). As a result of these wars the Turkish frontier was moved 400 miles away from the Austrian border, and Serbia had planted her flag in the route to the Aegean. Roumania, though ruled by a Hohenzollern, was cultivating the friendship of the Triple Entente, and there was danger that the Baghdad Railway in its European section would have to pass through unfriendly territory in



Serbia or Roumania. The ties that bound Italy to the Central Powers were loosening. The outlook was not pleasant.

True to their history the Prussian war lords determined to strengthen the position of Germany by increasing the strength of the army. By the military law of 1913 the peace strength of the military forces was increased from 723,000 to 870,000. In other respects, too, the army was made stronger and more efficient.

The result of this legislation was a panic in the neighboring capitals. France in the face of strong Socialistic opposition voted to strengthen her army by lengthening the term of service. Belgium followed the example of her greater neighbors and provided for universal service. Russia also lengthened the term of military service. Sweden went through a violent agitation for greater preparedness. England, alone, refused to make any changes in her military establishment.

During the earlier months of 1914 there was much talk about "inevitable" war in Germany. A host of agencies, unofficial but effective, were combining to force the nation over the precipice. The Socialist newspaper *Vorwaerts* wrote with regret about the constant barking of the war dogs: "The naval League of Germany numbers 100,000 members, while the various associations of veterans, which include about 2,000,000 members in all, are genuine hotbeds of jingoism."<sup>1</sup> The paper also calls attention to "the venomous character of the teaching in our public schools" and notes the fact that the "first atlas put into the hands of children nine years old" contains plans of the important battles of the Franco-Prussian war and traces the routes of the German forces in that war.

#### VI. *The Outbreak of War.*

The "will to war" was evidently present among the Prussians in the spring of 1914, but there must always be a good cause or at least a colorable pretext, if war is to be justified. Suddenly the pretext came in the murder of the Austrian Archduke on June 28 of that year. Two days later the Kiel Canal was completed; Germany was ready at last. The recent increases in the armies of her neighbors had not yet proved very fruitful; the situation was really fortunate. In France there was violent opposition to the new military law. Russian industry was threatened with paralysis from labor troubles. In Ireland 80,000 Ulstermen were in arms against 80,000 Irish volunteers to prevent the

<sup>1</sup>See *The Literary Digest*, Feb. 28, 1918, p. 423.



extension of "home rule" to northern Ireland. The signs were favorable; Germany ought to strike.

On July 5, a week after the murder of the Archduke, the Kaiser presided at a war council at Potsdam where the great crime was determined upon. Little is known about the personnel and the discussions of the Potsdam Conference, but it is known that Austria was given assurance of support in the matter of Serbia even to the point of war with Russia.<sup>1</sup> The financial magnates of the empire asked for two or three weeks to set their house in order, and the request was granted. Foreign secretary von Jagow went to Vienna to arrange details, and in due time the famous ultimatum was presented to Serbia. On July 28 Austria declared war on the Serbs. Three days later Germany declared war on Russia and prepared to invade France.

The German government has tried to make the world believe that war came when it did because Russia had mobilized, the order having been issued in the afternoon of July 31. Whether this was a general mobilization has been questioned; but the matter is unimportant, as partial mobilization may fall only a very little short of a general mobilization. It is quite likely that, during those last days of July, all the great powers were mobilizing, for it was clear that Europe was steadily being pushed toward war.

Germany was also mobilizing with the rest. The German White Book states that "the Kaiser ordered the mobilization of the entire German army and navy on August 1st at 5 p. m."<sup>2</sup> The word *entire* should be noted, as it may be important. On that same day, August 1, presumably after 5 p. m., Kaiser Wilhelm telegraphed to the king of England that he had ordered mobilization. "I hope that France will not be nervous. The troops on my frontier are at this moment being kept back by telegraph and by telephone from crossing the French frontier."<sup>3</sup>

That an army strong enough and sufficiently equipped for invasion could be gotten together in the few hours that remained of August 1 seems unthinkable. And yet, on that date, there was evidently a strong force on the French border tugging at the reins. The truth seems to be that German fear of Russian mobilization was pretense merely.

<sup>1</sup> For information as to the Potsdam Conference, see the *War Cyclopaedia* (Washington, 1917), the *World's Work*, June, 1918 (article by Ambassador Morgenthau), and the recently published *Memorandum of Prince Lichnowski, German Ambassador to England, 1912-1914*.

<sup>2</sup> *Diplomatic Documents of the European War* (London, 1915), p. 413.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 540.



Earlier than August 1 there must have been a partial though quite extensive German mobilization on the French frontier, the imperial telephone service holding the forces in check until proper orders for mobilization could be issued. Meanwhile, it was feared that a "nervous" France might also mobilize.

During those fateful days of July, 1914, the eyes of England were turned toward Ireland, where civil war was threatening. The government was struggling with a series of difficult domestic problems and was not prepared for war. The British navy was ready for immediate action, but military and financial preparedness had been neglected.

The English telegraph service (like that of Germany, though in a different spirit) was set in motion to restrain the armies on the frontiers of Europe. Sir Edward Grey fought valiantly to preserve the peace of the world and was almost successful. He proposed a scheme of mediation which even Austria, the nation most directly concerned, was willing to accept. "We are quite prepared to entertain the proposal of Sir E. Grey to negotiate between us and Servia"<sup>1</sup> wrote the Austrian foreign minister on July 31.

On that day fate laid the issues of war and peace into the hands of a single man, the Kaiser at Berlin. His position was such that he, and he alone of all the rulers in the world, had the power to choose whether peace should continue in Europe. For two days he entertained the temptation; on the second day he announced his choice; and the forces of destruction—war and famine, disease and death—leaped forth across the world.

<sup>1</sup> *Diplomatic Documents of the European War*, p. 526.