

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FORCE.

In England, as well as Germany and other countries, there are Nietzscheans, and some of them resent Mr. Thomas Hardy's identification of the overbearing spirit of Prussian militarism with the philosophy of the superman. Undeniably, the *uebermensch* was to be the product of a regulated evolution. Nietzsche was a eugenicist of sorts, whose ideal was a big-brained, strong-bodied, soulless tyrant, holding—without sentimental scruple—all inferior creatures in subjection. The English Nietzsche hated, but as a result partly, perhaps, of a Polish strain in his blood, he held the Germans in almost equal contempt. It was the historian Heinrich von Treitschke, a Saxon renegade, looking to the Hohenzollerns as the power destined to consolidate the German nationality with blood and iron and extend its dominions far and wide, who discovered in the Prussian the ready-made superman fitted by his virile qualities to rule the world. A fanatical Anglophobe, Treitschke sneered at the "unwarlike islanders" as a selfish, money-loving nation of shopkeepers, who glorified mediocrity, allowed the ignorant to govern the wise, and were generally disqualified for the continued enjoyment of their undeserved good fortune. "The State," according to his doctrine, "is the transmitter of all culture, and therefore entitled to claim all the powers of the individual for itself." On this theory he joined the issue between Prussian oligarchy, discipline and compulsion on the one hand and the free democracy of Great Britain on the other. Treitschke doubtless supplied the inspiration for the repressive and despotic policy of Bismarck, which has gone to seed in the sanguinary extravagances of Wilhelm II., but his teaching

is substantially that of Nietzsche in practical application. Between the two the point of contact is their apotheosis of force as the principal means of human progress. Nietzsche, who ended his career in a lunatic asylum, was a neurotic, unbalanced person, with something of the invalid's unqualified admiration of mere animal health, strength, and aggressiveness; but Mr. Hardy is right in holding that his unspiritual philosophy has bitten deeply into the modern German mind and perverted the national ambition into the fatal path of materialism and violence.

Completely Nietzschean in their aims and excuses have been the German diplomacy and military methods in the present world-

crisis. "The slave morals of Christianity," as Nietzsche called the Sermon on the Mount, claim a tender consideration for the weak and defenseless. But under the system of *Macht-politik* adopted by the Prussian Junkers what right had a petty State like Belgium to deny the road to a mighty Power advancing on its foe the easiest way? Treaties of neutrality and Hague Conventions, imposing on Germany the obligation not to commit a trespass, on Belgium the duty to resist aggression, and on England the responsibility of supporting that resistance, were merely "scraps of paper," to be repudiated the very moment they ceased to be convenient. National honor, as Bethmann-Hollweg pleaded in the Reichstag, must be subordinated to military necessity. According to a system of ethics which, as her rulers hold, does not bind the powerful, Germany acknowledges that she is doing wrong; but, then, contra to with equals and obligations to inferiors must stand aside when the need arises—of which she is the sole judge—to hack her way through to the heart of another State. In his contempt for international agreements Wilhelm II. merely follows the example of his ancestor, Frederick the Great, who, as Treitschke tells us, "was all his life charged with treachery, because no treaty or alliance could ever induce him to renounce the right of free self-determination." In other words, while a political system on the lines of Treitschke robs the subject of individual liberty, it confers on the sovereign an unlimited franchise of force and fraud. Wilhelm II. used this privilege when on July 31 his Minister at Brussels promised respect for Belgian neutrality, and on August 2 announced its intended violation. He used it again when having inflicted a confessed wrong on the Belgian people, he commanded his generals to silence all protest by making examples of such "frightfulness" that the whole population would be terrified and stunned. This was quite in the vein of the notorious speech in which the Kaiser adjured his Christian soldiers in China to emulate the Huns. And regardless of the provisions of the Hague Convention, to which Germany attached her worthless signature, the commands of the new Attila have been thoroughly obeyed. A plundered and ravaged Belgium, which has lost everything but honor, heart, and hope, bears witness to the unscrupulous thoroughness of German methods.

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It is thus that, in Treitschke's words, the German State transmits its "culture" to "barbarians." Culture, by its Teutonic misuse, is becoming a term of derision and contempt. "Die Kultur" is no equivalent for that broad effect of a truly liberal education which yields the "sweetness and light" commended to English Philistines by Matthew Arnold. It is the cult of the mailed fist, the booted heel, the Krupp gun, the incendiary torch. It is a Philistinism of the crudest violence, and its trophies are the ruins of Rheims and Louvain. Even Nietzsche, with all his devotion to the religion of brute force, might have stood appalled at the practical consequences of his doctrine. The old and admirable Germany of Goethe and Beethoven would not recognise its debased and degenerate successor. According to Principal Sir James Donaldson, of St. Andrews University, the Germans must thank the Prussian domination for the overthrow of all their noblest ideals. The Prussian magnates, or Junkers, who are at the bottom of the whole military system, are not the friends, but the enemies of culture. Prussia herself can boast of hardly one great name in literature, philosophy, or science. Even her universities are abject institutions, enslaved and degraded by the bureaucratic caste. The liberation of Europe will doubtless include that of the people of Germany itself, but the price must be paid—and it will be heavy—for the attempt to bring the whole world under the evil spell of the Kaiser's "accursed system."
