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The Pomp of Power

"*My son, you will be surprised with*
how little wisdom the world is governed."
AXEL OXENSTIERN.

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CHAPTER I.

The Entente

The co-operation between Great Britain and France which was destined to save civilisation had its origin in the Entente between the two countries concluded by Lord Lansdowne and M. Delcassé in 1904.

That understanding was the logical sequence of German policy and of Germany's resolution to impose her will upon Europe. It was the inevitable result of the use Germany made of her victory in the War of 1870: which should for all time serve as a reminder to the conquerors of a day not to forget that their grandsons will pay for their errors. Bismarck alone amongst the rulers of his nation saw the danger. But von Moltke and his supporters were able to override him, and he was forced to go with the tide.

It was in 1875 that Great Britain received her first shock respecting the extent of German ambitions. The *Times* correspondent in Paris, the celebrated de Blowitz, was able to expose the design then being hatched to attack France again solely because she was recovering too quickly from the effects of her defeat. It required the intervention of both England and Russia to prevent that outrage; and possibly also to open the eyes of the Emperor, Wilhelm I., to the machinations of his Chancellor. Bismarck never forgot nor forgave the letter which Queen Victoria wrote his sovereign on this occasion.

In his *Reflections and Reminiscences* Bismarck accuses Prince Gorchakoff of having concocted the whole story in order to get the credit of being the preserver of peace. Gorchakoff, who by that time was jealous of the great reputation of the younger man, was not sorry when, on May 10th, 1875, he was able to send from Berlin (where he had gone with the Czar) the famous telegram, "Maintenant la paix est assurée." But the statement and the inference were founded on fact, however unacceptable Bismarck may have thought the form in which they were conveyed to the world. The real cause of the bitter reproaches with which he then and later assailed Gorchakoff was his annoyance at Russia having sounded the alarm. His reply when his own Emperor sent him Queen Victoria's letter two months later was in Bismarck's weakest style. He made no serious case for the defence. But so far as possible he cleverly shifted the ground, which was one of his favourite proceedings when dealing with the rather slow-witted Wilhelm.

In 1879 Germany laid the basis of the group of Central Powers by her treaty with Austria-Hungary. Three years later Italy was taken into the German fold. This consummation of the Triple Alliance put Germany at the head of a Coalition with a population aggregating 170 million.

The Triple Alliance was to all intents and purposes offensive in its nature. It forced Europe (and upon more than one occasion) to accept its decisions by a clear warning that the only alternative was to fight. But obviously such a policy was a certain road to war. Any reasonable knowledge of history or any ordinary comprehension of human nature should have led to the conclusion that (despite geographical obstacles) this offensive Alliance would undoubtedly bring into being a defensive Alliance of other Great Powers, and that the final result would

be a test of strength.

It was only in 1892 that France emerged from an isolation which had lasted for more than twenty years. While even the treaty which was then made with Russia stipulated that it was dependent upon the maintenance of the existing territorial situation: for Russia made it plain that she would not support France in any attempt to recover Alsace and Lorraine.

But Germany was still able to be coercive. In 1905 she demanded and obtained the retirement from the Quai d'Orsay of M. Delcassé, whose part in certain conversations with England she had not pardoned.[1] Though it is fair to add that had the Prime Minister of the day (that eminent international financier but much less praiseworthy politician, M. Rouvier) supported his colleague, had he refused to allow his country to be humiliated, had he acted as did M. Clemenceau three years later, when Germany again attempted to dictate in the same fashion about the Casablanca deserters, the result would have been different.

In 1906 came Algeciras. While in 1908, when Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Kaiser, in a speech of rare impudence, dared Russia to move.

The latter incident was the high-water mark of German domination in Europe. It is probable that the Panther was sent to Agadir primarily in order to test the firmness of the understanding between Great Britain and France: although that is a question which cannot be elucidated until certain documents which have not yet seen the light of day are published. In any event, from that time the German Government realised that unless it reversed its own policy (and that course was never contemplated) the bond between Great Britain and France was

likely to become stronger year by year. In the ultimate result this consideration was not without its effect in fixing the date of the conflict—a date chosen by Germany to suit her own interests. But in the meantime the Wilhelmstrasse did what it could to soothe British apprehensions, mainly through its unwitting tool, Lord Haldane.

On the other hand, Agadir turned the tide in France. All who followed the course of national feeling in that country were struck by the significant change that was apparent in the years immediately preceding 1914. The catastrophe of 1870 left a depressed race which had little faith in its own rulers, and which only wanted to avoid, at any cost, another clash with Germany. When that danger threatened either an appeal was made to the other powers, or concessions were granted which could never have been wrung from France before 1870 or after 1910. M. André Tardieu has rightly said that the men of his generation, those who arrived at maturity about 1900, were too often prone to practise a patriotism of resignation.

This revulsion was a natural reaction. Agadir merely served to make it clear to observers that a new sentiment had taken possession of the nation. The late Comte Albert de Mun, in a book written at this period, told of the difference to be found throughout the country. There was no longer the cry of peace at any price. Certainly there was no thirst for military adventures. But the predominant idea was that Germany had too often exacted too much by clanking the sword; that the time had come to settle matters once and for all; that it was better to fight than constantly to yield to blustering from Berlin.

The country as a whole was finally convinced that war within a short time was inevitable; that it was made inevitable

by the determination of Germany to dominate.

Upon this point the judgment of the people coincided with that of their political leaders. M. Poincaré and M. Clemenceau would doubtless have agreed upon that question more whole-heartedly than they have agreed about anything else then or since: Poincaré whom Clemenceau, aided by the late Camille Pelletan, did his utmost to defeat in the presidential election of 1913. M. Briand and Paul Déroulède would have been at one. M. Barthou gave a practical expression of his opinion when he had the courage to sacrifice his popularity in order to secure the enactment of the Three Years Service. Even M. Léon Daudet was, upon this subject, in accord with men with whom he saw eye to eye about nothing else. All thought that war was probable; the majority thought it was certain. An understanding with Great Britain was therefore of the first importance.

Unfortunately those in political power in England held an entirely different view about the future. They did not believe that Germany would ever attack France; and only admitted that, if the improbable did occur, German troops would doubtless seek a passage through Belgium. At the beginning of 1914 they saw no force in the contention that Germany was not overtaxing herself to maintain an Army and a Navy which she did not mean to use the day when she could no longer get her own way without resort to force of arms. To give these politicians credit they were entirely sincere. Otherwise they would never have spoken with such freedom. In January, 1914, Mr. Lloyd George publicly derided the idea of any possibility of war; and urged that it was the opportune time to reduce the naval estimates. He would have uttered very different words had he imagined that Germany nurtured any aggressive designs. For upon a previous occasion—at the time of the Agadir trouble in 1911—he had not

hesitated to warn that country of the risk she was running in language so strong and so plain that it had alike startled and halted the Kaiser's Government. But in 1914 the Liberals believed that the European situation was clearer and calmer; and many lesser political lights spoke and thought like Mr. Lloyd George.

These being the diverse views held in England and in France, it is interesting to examine what was in fact the agreement or arrangement which existed between the two countries at that time.

In November, 1912, Sir Edward Grey wrote the French Ambassador, M. Paul Cambon, as follows:

> "On different occasions, during recent years, the French and British Military and Naval General Staffs have exchanged views. It has always been understood that these exchanges of views do not affect the liberty of either Government to decide, at any time in the future, whether or not it should support the other by force of arms.
>
> "We have admitted that our exchanges of technical views do not constitute and ought not to be regarded as constituting an engagement which obliges either Government to intervene in an eventuality which has not yet presented itself, and which may never occur. For instance, the present division of the French and English Fleets does not rest upon an engagement to collaborate in case of war.
>
> "You have, however, remarked that if either Government had grave reasons to fear an

> unprovoked attack on the part of a third power, it would be essential to know whether, in that event, one power could count upon the military assistance of the other.
>
> "I agree that if either Government has reason to fear an unprovoked attack by a third power, or any other event threatening the general peace, this Government will immediately examine with the other as to whether they ought not to act together to prevent the aggression and to maintain peace; and, in that case, to seek the measures that they might be disposed to take in common. If these measures necessitate military action, the plans of the General Staffs will at once be considered, and the two Governments will then decide upon the effect which it may be desirable to give to them."

This tells the whole tale. There was no further or other diplomatic understanding. Sir Edward Grey's letter calls for only one comment. While it was stipulated that the division of English and French Fleets (whereby the latter was kept almost in its totality on guard in the Mediterranean so as to allow the former to concentrate in the North Sea) did not place any obligation upon Great Britain, yet obviously the result might be to put France at a disadvantage in the event of a sudden declaration of war. That is exactly what did occur in August, 1914, when the French Channel coast was virtually without any naval protection.

General Lanrezac has written[2] that England had promised her support to France in the twofold event of Germany being the aggressor and also violating Belgian neutrality; but that this

undertaking was subject to such reserves that it might possibly only become effective too late. That statement is not in accord with the facts. M. André Tardieu gave a clearer and more accurate account of the situation when he said: “Even in the years preceding the war, in spite of the German danger which was felt to be rising, Great Britain was not bound. On August 2nd, 1914, she was free, and could, in full independence, choose her own path.”

While in 1919 the French Government, in a memorandum upon the Rhine Boundary which it submitted to the Peace Conference, referred to “l’engagement militaire défensif, très limité, qui en 1914 liait à la France la Grande-Bretagne.”[3]

The truth was that upon several occasions during the years preceding 1914 (and notably at the time of the Agadir crisis in 1911) the General Staffs of the two countries had made plans, which had been changed from time to time, for the possible participation of British troops in a war between France and Germany.

But there was no certitude that these plans would ever be used, for absolute reliance could not be placed upon English assistance. The Quai d’Orsay and the French General Staff held identical views upon this point. They thought, and hoped, that in any German violation of Belgian neutrality Great Britain would see an unavoidable *casus belli*. But the General Staff was obliged to make its plans without counting entirely upon this support; or, at best, alternatively.

The evidence given by General de Castelnau and Maréchal Joffre before la Commission d’Enquête sur le Rôle et la Situation de la Métallurgie en France, fully confirms this statement.

General de Castelnau said:

> "Put yourself in the position of the person who, in 1912-'13, established the plan of war. Had a prophet foretold that England would join with us and America also? Germany held at that moment all England and all America to feed her.
>
> "THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION: Did our General Staff make its plan having the idea that in the event of war Germany might be fed by England and America?
>
> "GENERAL DE CASTELNAU: It was a current idea.
>
> "THE PRESIDENT: Nevertheless there was an agreement (accord) between France and England.
>
> "GENERAL DE CASTELNAU: Agreement? I don't think so. What do you mean by England?
>
> "THE PRESIDENT: The British Empire taken as a whole. There was an understanding (entente).
>
> "GENERAL DE CASTELNAU: What understanding?
>
> "THE PRESIDENT: An understanding that should have ensured at least a benevolent neutrality in case of a declaration of war.
>
> "GENERAL DE CASTELNAU: I don't know about that understanding. There had been interviews, conversation with the English General Staff, yes. But never with the English Government, at least not to my knowledge."[4]

Some days later the President of the Commission asked

Maréchal Joffre: “How could General de Castelnau say that he did not know of the agreement made with the English General Staff upon the subject of an eventual participation of the English Army?”[5]

Joffre replied: “I cannot tell you what General de Castelnau said. It is certain that this agreement existed conditionally, that is to say that England had not made any engagement. Therefore the measures to be taken if England joined and if England did not join were both considered. There were agreements between the General Staffs, but there were no diplomatic agreements, but only between the General Staffs. You know that England only came in some days after the outbreak of the war. Personally, I was convinced that she would join, but after all, there was no engagement on her part. There were only the plans on the means of embarking and disembarking, and the places which should be reserved for the troops.”

The remainder of Joffre’s evidence on this point was (as on so many others) confused and contradictory. But upon the whole, while admitting that there was no certainty of British aid, he sought to excuse himself for not extending his Left further by suggesting that he counted upon six British Divisions.[6]

But the French General Staff was also hampered by not knowing what would be the attitude of Belgium in the event of her territory being invaded by German troops. This remained an enigma until the last moment. Lord French has said with reason that it is regrettable that Belgium did not decide earlier upon the line she should adopt in the hypothesis of a general war. Joffre has declared that he relied upon the collaboration of the Belgian Army since it was reasonable to suppose that certain forts would not have been constructed except for the express purpose

of repelling any attack by Germany. But at best this was a supposition based upon probabilities. The question was always considered so doubtful that amongst the more important matters which the French General Staff had noted for special inquiry, in any period of political tension preceding a possible war with Germany, was whether the Belgians were making preparations in their fortresses on the Meuse. No better refutation could be given of the German falsehood that Belgium had been lacking in loyal observance of the treaty that guaranteed her independence. But the resulting uncertainty was a handicap to the French General Staff.

As a matter of fact it was only in July, 1914, that the Chief of the Staff, General de Selliers de Moranville, submitted to the Minister of War the plans for the mobilisation of the Belgian Army in the case of a German invasion; while these plans contemplated not the defence of the Meuse, but "la position de Gèthale."[7]

It was only when Germany had served notice that she intended to disregard the neutral rights which she had guaranteed that the attitude of Belgium was definitely known.

The decision of the British Government rested upon more complex grounds. Whether or not England should support France was a question which gave rise to a certain division of opinion throughout the country; but to a much more acute and more dangerous one within the Cabinet itself.

Mr. Asquith saw from the outset the risk of allowing France to be overwhelmed; but, always a parliamentarian rather than a statesman, he did not press his view forcibly upon his colleagues; nor is it certain that he would have done so in any event. Mr. Winston Churchill was throughout in favour of

standing side by side with France. Mr. Lloyd George (then Chancellor of the Exchequer) was at first undecided, although upon the whole he seemed likely to be won over by the arguments of Mr. Churchill. But on Thursday, July 30th, a deputation of bankers and financiers represented to him that the interests both of the country and of the world at large demanded that Great Britain should stand aside and should not take part in any conflict.[8] Such a decided opinion, coming from such a quarter, naturally had its effect upon Mr. Lloyd George. In the critical days which followed he still hesitated, but his tendency was then to favour the policy of non-intervention. This was also in accord with the view held at that time by the majority of the Cabinet.

Sir Edward Grey seemed to be hoping against hope that war might be averted. It was to this sincere statesman a real tragedy to see the structure which he had built to maintain peace dissolving before his eyes. M. Paul Cambon has said[9] that during this terrible week there were in Sir Edward Grey two men, struggling against each other: the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who realised by the reports from all the Embassies that a war seemed inevitable, and the Idealist, who could not bring himself to take any step which might seem to bear the nature of a threat, for fear that he might thereby involve England in the struggle.

The part taken by Lord Haldane is not so clear. As Secretary of State for War (in 1914 he was Lord Chancellor) he had some years earlier been responsible for changes of a far-reaching nature in the Army and in the military system of the country. Those who are qualified to speak with authority upon such matters differ in their opinion of his work at the War Office. Others who after 1914 criticised Lord Haldane upon different

grounds were perhaps sometimes too sweeping in their condemnation. But to some extent he brought this upon himself. For while the value of his reforms may be a subject for discussion, it is a fact (proved by his own statements) that he was befooled by the German Emperor and his entourage.

On account of his supposed knowledge of German mentality, and his actual friendship with many German politicians, Lord Haldane was relied upon to advise Downing Street about the real intentions of the Wilhelmstrasse, and the state of public opinion in what he had once called his spiritual home. It is on record that he told the country that Germany had no warlike intentions, and that there was no reason to be alarmed. Later, but subsequent to the outbreak of war, he stated that he had really been uneasy ever since his last visit to Berlin. Whether or not he told that to his colleagues is less clear. But it is also less important. That only affects the question of Lord Haldane's sincerity. If he told the Cabinet and the country the same thing it means that he was hoodwinked in Berlin. That is the more probable, the most charitable, and on the whole the pleasanter explanation, though it is one which Lord Haldane's vanity would never allow him to proffer. But if he disclosed the danger to the Cabinet, and at the same time lulled the public into a false sense of security, his fault is greater and his responsibilities graver.

The attitude adopted by the leaders of the Opposition, Mr. Bonar Law and Lord Lansdowne, in voluntarily promising to support the Government if it went to war, undoubtedly had an effect upon some members of the Cabinet. Nevertheless, the division of opinion (Lord Morley, Mr. John Burns, and Lord Beauchamp being unalterably opposed to any forcible intervention) still prevented a definite decision. On July 27th,

M. de Fleuriau, then Chargé d'Affaires in London, telegraphed to Paris that the German and Austrian ambassadors were letting it be understood that they were "sure" that England would remain neutral. While as late as Saturday, August 1st, Sir Edward Grey, after a Cabinet Council held that day, informed M. Cambon that the Government did not feel able to decide in favour of taking part in a European war. The French Ambassador, in protesting, dwelt at length upon the gravity of such a course; and referred in particular to the fact that it was as a result of the arrangement between the General Staffs of the two countries that the French Channel coast was left open to German assaults.

The Cabinet met again on the morning of Sunday, August 2nd. There is some reason to believe (although any absolute confirmation is lacking) that Sir Edward Grey, while reiterating that he had taken no engagement as Foreign Minister which bound the country, and while himself not urging British participation in the conflict, intimated that if the Government decided to take no action in the event of the violation of Belgian neutrality, his usefulness in Downing Street might be gone. There is likewise some ground for thinking that Mr. Lloyd George was less than ever disposed to support those who favoured acting closely with France. But one thing certain is that the meeting came to an end without any further decision having been reached. One Cabinet Minister subsequently told me that he, Lord Beauchamp and others, who were in favour of England remaining neutral, left the meeting convinced that their view would prevail.[10]

But later in the day there was another council. Matters then came to a head; and the Cabinet decided that a German attack on the French Coast would be considered a *casus belli*, and that the

British Fleet would co-operate to repel it.

In the course of the evening this decision was communicated to the French Ambassador. During his twenty years at Albert Gate M. Cambon's greatest hope had been for an effective alliance with Great Britain, his greatest fear that it might not be forthcoming at the supreme moment. That Sunday night he judged the situation with his habitual discretion and acumen. He knew that his cause was won; that a great nation did not wage war by halves. The moment she decided to join forces at sea it inevitably followed that Great Britain would likewise support France on land. If anyone had doubts on that point they vanished when Germany waved aside her guarantee of Belgian neutrality, and Sir Edward Goschen asked for his passports.

Unfortunately the military authorities were not of one mind about the use to be made of the Expeditionary Force. Some time was lost in awaiting the arrival of a French Military Mission. It then appeared that Sir Douglas Haig was in favour of delaying the despatch of the British troops until events showed whether it would be better to send them to Belgium or to France. While Lord Kitchener (who had become Minister of War) thought that it would be wiser to concentrate them near Amiens. But Sir John French, General Wilson, and the majority agreed with the representative of the French General Staff, Colonel Huguet, that it was wiser to abide by the original plans, made before the war, whereby the British would take their stand behind Maubeuge in the Cambrai-Le Câteau zone.

This indecision showed in the very first days of the war the vital weakness of Allies who had no complete preconceived plans of joint action. It was the basic error which was destined to prolong the war; and, at times, to jeopardise the issue.

Germany began the struggle with the advantage of being the aggressor, who knew exactly what she meant to do, and had arranged how to do it.

For some time after 1870 von Moltke (who remained Chief of the Staff until 1888) thought that Germany would be strong enough to take the offensive against both France and Russia in the event of a simultaneous war with each of those countries. It was his growing fear that the rapid recovery of France might render that plan unsafe, which led to the attempt to fasten another quarrel on that country in 1875. When that plot was exposed, von Moltke changed his plan to one which, devoid of all technical details, consisted in a defensive campaign as regards France, and an offensive one against Russia.

In 1888 von Moltke was succeeded by Count Waldersee, who as Quartermaster-General had been his active coadjutor since 1882. At one time Waldersee favoured an offensive against France. But finally he maintained von Moltke's plan, with the reservation that if the time of year when hostilities broke out rendered a full offensive against Russia impracticable, France would be attacked between Toul and Epinay.

Three years later von Schlieffen (the greatest German strategist since von Moltke) succeeded Waldersee. He was soon called upon to reconsider the whole situation in view of the fact that an alliance between France and Russia had actually been concluded. For some years he also maintained von Moltke's plan, although more through necessity than by conviction. But finally he adopted one which, in brief, contemplated an attack against the French centre, combined with an envelopment of the French Left. This naturally involved the invasion of Belgium.

But later von Schlieffen evolved a second plan. As the years went by he constantly strengthened his Right; the very gist of his project being the envelopment of the French Left. By degrees he ultimately arrived at the idea of throwing nearly four-fifths of his mobilised forces upon the left wing of the French Army, while the invasion of Holland was not entirely eliminated from these calculations.

The younger von Moltke, who became Chief of the Staff in 1906, inherited this plan. While he did not change its character he does not appear to have adopted it with any enthusiasm. He had neither the courage nor the resolution to sweep it aside, but he nibbled at it. Von Schlieffen had constantly worried his assistants to make the Right stronger, but von Moltke strengthened his Left at the expense of his Right. Undoubtedly von Schlieffen's plan was an audacious conception; and it required a strong and bold man to put it into execution. But von Moltke was naturally feeble and vacillating.[11]

Any country which does not ensure that its diplomatic and military authorities work closely together is courting disaster. Military measures taken without proper regard for the diplomatic results (which again may entail military consequences) are equally as dangerous as diplomatic conventions made without due reflection upon their military repercussion. It may be impossible always to hold an even balance; but to do so ought to be the constant endeavour. Bismarck was always mindful of this national necessity. His action in altering in the very presence of von Moltke the Kaiser's telegram from Ems (which, in its original form, dashed the hopes of a war for which both had schemed and prepared) is an outstanding if unpleasant example of a Foreign Office and a War Office really working together. In the settlement of the

terms of peace Bismarck and von Moltke each made concessions to the other; although the statement that the former was entirely opposed to the retention of Alsace and Lorraine must be taken with some reserve. But certainly the Chancellor and the Chief of the Staff were in full accord when in 1875 they would wantonly have attacked France had it not been for the intervention of Great Britain and Russia.

After war had actually been declared Germany twice abandoned this sound policy; and acted upon Bernhardi's theory that the diplomatists should shape their course in such a way as will best carry out and second the designs of the High Command. In both instances the result was disastrous. The invasion of Belgium had the effect of immediately bringing England into the war. Great as was the initial advantage to be gained through entering France by way of the Meuse, it was more than offset by having the British Empire as an active foe from almost the first day of the war. While what little the diplomatists could do afterwards only aggravated the situation and increased the final reckoning, Germany still pays for those unfortunate statements that a treaty is a scrap of paper, and that necessity knows no law, in the distrust with which she is viewed by the world at large. Bismarck, always more adept than his successors, put the contention in a more convincing light when he once said "All contracts between great states cease to be unconditional and binding as soon as they are tested by 'the struggle for existence.' No great nation will ever be induced to sacrifice its existence on the altar of fidelity to contract when it is compelled to choose between the two." The soundness of that statement was illustrated more than once during the war. But it is one thing to denounce a treaty because it affects the safety of the State, and another for years deliberately to prepare to

violate it for aggressive ends.

Equally fatal was the military decision ruthlessly to press the submarine warfare regardless of the diplomatic consequence; which, in that case, was the addition of the United States to the list of Germany's opponents.

These examples are glaring. But the British Government committed (and seems likely again to commit) a fault of an exactly similar nature. Indeed, in July, 1914, one vital distinction between the position of Great Britain and Germany, to the disadvantage of the former, was that there was a practical gap in the field which should have been closely covered by the combined work of the Foreign Office and the War Office. Since there was no defensive alliance between England and France the latter was forced to draw its plan of campaign not only in ignorance of the eventual attitude of Belgium (that it was perhaps impossible to avoid), but not knowing even until after the actual outbreak of hostilities whether there would be any British troops in the French line: not knowing, therefore, to what point it would be necessary to extend the French Left. The evidence of Joffre and of de Castelnau, and above all Sir Edward Grey's letter to M. Paul Cambon, show that while there had been conversations between the General Staffs there was no diplomatic agreement. Even the interviews between the staffs were so little binding in their nature that after the war began the question of where the British troops should make their junction with the French Army was again a subject of discussion; while in the end only four divisions were sent instead of the six upon which the French General Staff had partially relied.

At first sight the result of this limping policy would seem to bear hardly upon France. But the brunt was bound to fall with

equal weight upon England. British troops were sent to try to carry out a plan of campaign which had been drafted without the assistance or assent and without engaging the responsibility of any Englishman: a plan of campaign which foresaw nothing which did happen, and which made little or no preparation for much that was bound to happen: a plan of campaign which, in the words of a French critic[12] who speaks with some authority, was “humanly impossible.”

CHAPTER II.

Plan XVII.

Thirty days of warfare sufficed to prove that the strategy of the French General Staff was defective at every point. When this became apparent Joffre unfairly and ungenerously tried to throw the blame on his lieutenants and their men. But the facts are against him. General Bonnal has succinctly defined strategy to be the art of conception. It is now admitted by all except some of those responsible that the whole conception of the plan of campaign was erroneous.

Germany's declaration of war did not take France by surprise. For more than a generation she had prepared for the struggle. It is true that during the forty-three years between 1871 and 1914 there had been forty-one Ministers of War; and undeniably such frequent changes were not in themselves favourable to the development of military plans. Yet despite this constant stream of arrivals and departures at the rue Saint Dominique the General Staff continued its work without any great interruption. During the period immediately preceding the war there was, indeed, little or no undue interference on the part of politicians.

France spent more on her Army than did any other country except Germany. From 1872 to 1895 the expenditure of each was about 14 milliards of francs. From 1896 to 1912 Germany spent 16 milliards 875 millions, and France 11 milliards 418 millions. When the difference in population and in wealth is

taken into account these figures show the extraordinary effort which France made to keep pace with her traditional enemy.

Unfortunately the money of the French tax-payers produced less than did that collected in Germany. The departmental system of the War Office was complicated, cumbersome, and lacking in unison. The German Minister of War had only four immediate subordinate departments. The French War Office had no less than fourteen, each independent of the other. In an attempt to check the resulting confusion, another branch, the Direction of Control, was created. But this in no way lessened the evil.

However, it is abundantly clear that the war did not take France by surprise. If she was unprepared, it was only in the sense that the General Staff had staked everything on a plan which was humanly impossible; while it counted so absolutely upon the success of that plan that it neglected to take even ordinary precautions to meet the situation which was bound to arise in the event of a reverse.

In 1911 General Michel was Vice-President of the Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre, and also the designated Commander-in-Chief of the French armies in the event of war. In February of that year he submitted to the then Minister of War, Messimy (himself a soldier), a plan of campaign, based upon the theory that the Germans would invade France by the left bank of the Meuse, and would execute a turning movement on such a vast scale as would, from the outset, necessitate putting their reserves in the first line. Michel, therefore, proposed taking strategic safeguards against this movement, and also making a much more extensive use of the French reserves than had been previously contemplated. A month later Michel gave a

conference in which he criticised and opposed the idea of an offensive *à l'outrance*, which was then so popular in certain French military circles. He thereby incurred the hostility of the younger members of the Staff as well as some of his own immediate colleagues; while even Pétain, then a colonel, was heard to say that Michel had lost the confidence of the Army.

In July Messimy obliged the latter to place part of his proposal before the Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre. He received no support whatever, and Messimy, therefore, forced him to resign the vice-chairmanship as well as the eventual leadership in time of war. It is fair to add, however, that (as appeared later) Michel's report to the Minister of War was never submitted in full to the Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre,[13] and that it was only the suggestions about the utilization of the reserves upon which that body deliberated.

It is questionable whether Michel was a strong man. Messimy never had any belief in his competency. Later, when the war broke out, he was Military Governor of Paris. Messimy said plainly that he thought him to be incapable and demanded his resignation, and when Michel demurred, he threatened to send him forthwith as a prisoner to the Cherche-Midi. But, whatever may be the measure of Michel's ability, later events proved that his vision of the future was correct. He foresaw both what Germany would do and what was necessary for the protection of France.

Messimy considered appointing either Pau or Galliéni as Michel's successor. But the fact that both would retire in 1912, on account of age, told against them: although by a special decree Galliéni was later retained on the active list without limit of age, upon the ground that he had held chief command in

front of the enemy. Moreover, Pau (who was a veteran of the war of 1870) imposed the condition that he should have the sole power of appointment to the higher commands.

Messimy, therefore, finally offered the post to Joffre, who was already a member of the Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre, and who would not come under the age limit for several years. It was a decision which he regretted later. In January, 1916, he wrote Galliéni that he was sorry he had not appointed him instead of Joffre; while his subsequent evidence before a parliamentary committee seemed, upon the whole, to support the view that this was not an empty compliment, but the expression alike of his sincere regret and of his real opinion.

Joffre was an engineer officer. He had served under Galliéni in Madagascar, and had had other colonial experience. But he knew little or nothing of the interior working of the General Staff, and he would have refused the proposal had not Pau encouraged him to accept it. It was Pau who suggested to him that, with the aid of de Castelnau, he would be able to meet the difficulties of the routine which he dreaded. Joffre, therefore, made it a condition of his acceptance that de Castelnau should be named as his assistant; and after twenty-four hours reflection Messimy agreed.

Joffre is, by birth and nature, a Catalonian. His tranquil and unshakable confidence in himself made him regard colleagues (in the true sense of that word) as unnecessary, while his love of secrecy rendered them distasteful to him. As Vice-President of the Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre he seems to have been omnipotent. At the meetings he would state at the same time both the question to be decided and his own decision: and it was rare that there was any opposition.

He had never directly commanded any body of troops. He was incapable of directing any operations in the field. In giving evidence after the war, Messimy said it was, of course, known to everyone that it was General Berthelot, and not Joffre, who had commanded the operations. It is also highly improbable that he was able to evolve or draft any plan of campaign. Neither his previous career nor experience give any ground for thinking that he could do so. While his own testimony before the Commission sur la Métallurgie shows that he was hopelessly at sea about the whole matter.

But he was capable of taking a decision upon the advice given to him by the subordinates who surrounded him and in whose attachment to himself he had confidence: and equally capable of holding to that decision with great tenacity. The very fact that he had few original ideas, but an imposing and massive exterior, made him exactly the man whom the General Staff wanted as an exponent of the theories with which it provided him. General Lanrezac has aptly said that Joffre was really not an individual, but a "raison sociale." It was a firm which bore his name, but in which he was not the most active partner. For the General Staff was dominated by a group of comparatively young and extremely ambitious officers, who were entirely possessed by the conviction that an offensive *à l'outrance* would win the next war with Germany and that nothing else could; that the conflict would be of short duration[14] and the first battles decisive; which latter opinion was also held by von Schlieffen.

The chief protagonist of this doctrine was a brilliant and determined man, whose name was little known to the public, but who played an important part in shaping the plans of the French General Staff: Colonel (later General) Loyseau de

Grandmaison, who was killed at Soissons.[15] In the light of what the war taught, the theories of this heroic, but mistaken, officer make strange reading to-day. There seems to be an almost hysterical strain running through such sentences as: "The least caution in the offensive destroys all its efficacy and loses all its advantages. In the offensive, imprudence is the best safeguard. Only the offensive method can force the victory. It is necessary to prepare it and to prepare others for it. Cultivating with passion, with exaggeration, and even to the smallest details of instructions, all that is marked by the offensive spirit; let us go to excess, and perhaps that will not be enough."

The instructions issued to the Army, from time to time before 1914, during the period when Joffre was Chief of the Staff, bore out this teaching. For instance, in December, 1913, it was even laid down that artillery should not prepare the way for infantry attacks, but should support them. For, as General Ruffey subsequently testified before the Commission sur la Métallurgie, Joffre "was entirely subjugated by the young men of his entourage, and listened complacently to their views, which were often childish."

In one sense it is true that only an offensive can lead to a decision. But that dictum does not mean that an offensive will always succeed. The time, to some extent the number of the opposing forces, and, in these days, above all, the comparative artillery strength must be taken into account. But while the French General Staff adopted the doctrine with enthusiasm, it entirely lost sight of these considerations. It might, with advantage, have remembered that after 1870 von Moltke said: "The French never having attacked me, I was obliged to take the offensive myself. But I only did so against my own will, for, in my opinion, I thus obtained less decisive and more dearly-

bought successes than I would have been able to get by a method more in conformity with my own ideas."[16]

While, elsewhere, von Moltke, after referring to the heavy price which had always to be paid for an offensive *à l'outrance*, added: "I prefer the proceeding which consists in passing to the offensive after having repulsed several attacks." That, as Lieutenant-Colonel Thomasson has pointed out, is the very method by which Foch eventually won the war.

Even Bernhardt the great apostle of the offensive, has written: "If we want to count upon military successes, we must not forget that attack is infinitely more difficult than ever, and that the assailant, to obtain the victory, needs to have a very marked superiority. It is the task of strategy to assure it."

It was the greatest fault of the French General Staff, before 1914, that it entirely neglected or ignored that task, apparently believing that material disadvantages could be overcome by engendering, through constant teaching and orders, a spirit of aggression.

Nor did all British military authorities share the blind faith of the French General Staff that an offensive *à l'outrance* was a sure road to a speedy victory. In August, 1914, Lord Kitchener not only warned the French military mission that the war would be a long one, but he also expressed the opinion that the French plan was dangerous. The French Military Attaché in London wrote to the rue St. Dominique that Kitchener was "entirely opposed to the offensive; if we listened to him we would remain on the defensive and await three successive attacks by the German forces; he is imbued with the principles of colonial warfare and knows nothing of the material and moral advantages of the offensive."[17]

In 1913 a pamphlet appeared, entitled *La Concentration allemande*, which, to all intents and purposes, gave utterance to the view and plans of the General Staff. Although it was published anonymously, military circles were generally aware of the identity of the author. But it was not until 1915 that *Le Temps* informed the public that it was Lieutenant-Colonel (now General) Buat, who had been a professor at the École Supérieure de Guerre, who was then on the General Staff, and who subsequently served throughout the war with great distinction, being Major-General of the French Armies when the armistice was signed.

In order to strike the imagination, Buat pretended that, while travelling in Germany, he had found a copy of the German plan of campaign, which had been left in a railway carriage. According to this, the Germans would enter France with twenty-two army corps—that is, one million three hundred thousand men—of whom nine hundred thousand would belong to the active army and four hundred thousand would be reservists, who would be given only such secondary missions as the occupation of conquered territory. Part of these forces were to come by the right bank of the Meuse. Buat, therefore, concluded that the French forces ought to face north-east on a line extending from Belfort to Mézières. Incidentally, he thus disclosed to the Germans the French plan of concentration. As a matter of fact, the then existing plan XVI is provided for a concentration exactly from Belfort to Mézières, although its successor, the more famous Plan XVII., extended the line to Hirson.[18]

At the same time Buat entirely misconceived both the German plan and the numbers they intended to use.[19] It is true that German authorities had previously written that their forces

would be divided into an army of shock and an army of occupation. Apparently Buat (as well as the General Staff) accepted this statement without hesitation. It is impossible to say now whether it was ever sincere or whether it was made simply in order to induce the German people to accept more readily the military taxation and burdens imposed upon them. The probability seems to be that it was the real plan until 1912. But there are many indications that from that time the intention was to use the reservists in the first line immediately. However, the French General Staff accepted the German statements all the more readily because they fitted in with its own conviction that the French reservists would be useless in the first line.

But in the work, *Quatre Mois de Guerre*, published at the end of 1914 by the French General Staff for the use of the representatives of France abroad, it is calculated that the total German forces mobilised and actually used against the French armies during the first weeks numbered one million four hundred thousand men. The difference (one hundred thousand) between this figure and that in Buat's pamphlet is not enormous. But the real distinction lies in the use made of these troops. Buat calculated upon a shock army of about nine hundred thousand. As a matter of fact, there were thirty-four corps in the first line. For the reserves were used there from the beginning; and the work which the French General Staff had imagined would occupy them was done mainly by the Landwehr or other troops. The difference, as Lieutenant-Colonel de Thomasson has pointed out,[20] was just equal to the two armies of von Klück and von Bülow, which were destined to pass by the left bank of the Meuse. In brief, the French General Staff made an error of fifty per cent. in estimating the German shock effectives.[21]

Moreover, the General Staff did not think that the Germans

would come by the left bank of the Meuse, precisely because it was convinced that Germany would not put her reserves in the first line. Thus one error led to another. “Le commandement français ne pensait pas que le mouvement débordant à travers la Belgique dût s’étendre sur la rive nord de la Meuse, parce qu’il ne croyait pas que les Allemands emploieraient leurs divisions de réserve en première ligne dès le début des opérations.” These are the words of General Mangin, a critic, who, other things being equal, is inclined to hold the scales somewhat in favour of Joffre.

It was, therefore, in vain that Galliéni had warned the General Staff that Maubeuge should be further fortified; and while, apparently, a little more heed was paid to his advice about making greater provision for the defence of the left bank of the Meuse, between Verdun and Mézières, yet the Staff began to study the question so tardily that nothing had actually been accomplished when war broke out.

The tale is the same about heavy artillery. The records of the Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre show that Galliéni drew attention to this crying need (as did also General Ruffey and General Dubail) in October, 1913, and again in March, 1914, as he had previously done in 1911 in a report to the Minister of War. No attention was given to these remonstrances. It was thought that the lighter 75 would do everything.[22] It needed a war itself to enforce Galliéni’s contention. In the early days of the conflict nothing was more severely felt and no negligence was more dearly paid for than this lack of heavy artillery. It was only in 1915 that it was finally supplied, and that the necessary officers and men were instructed in its use.[23]

In 1913 Joffre gave a lecture to the former scholars of the

École Polytechnique. The text of his discourse, which did not deal much with strategy, was the necessity of preparation in time of peace: “In our days ‘to be ready’ has a meaning which it would have been difficult for those who formerly conducted war to understand. Everything must be organised, everything foreseen. Once hostilities have begun, no improvisation will serve. What lacks then will lack definitely. The least omission may cause a disaster.”

Excellent words. But, in the way of material preparation, Joffre and the General Staff were grossly at fault in respect both to artillery, air armament, and many other minor matters.

It has been contended that the General Staff was restricted because successive Governments would not allow a sufficient expenditure. Naturally there always is, and always will be, some contest upon the subject of expenditure between the Treasury and the heads of the military establishment: it would be an unhealthy sign were it otherwise. But the figures do not show that the French Parliament was niggardly. What is more apparent is that the money was often ill spent. While, in any event it is, in the last analysis, the duty of the General Staff to cut its coat according to its cloth, and not to attempt what it knows, or ought to know, is impossible of achievement on account of lack of means.

But one of the very writers who has advanced this defence of Joffre and the General Staff has written elsewhere, in the same work, that in 1914 French soldiers “were still dressed as they were in 1830, when rifles only carried to a distance of 200 paces, and God knows how many losses were imposed upon us by the képi and the red trousers; we had no machine-guns, few big cannon, and hardly any aeroplanes; our cavalry thought only

of brilliant charges, and our cavalry chiefs acted as if they did not know that horses must drink during the day and must rest in their stables at night-time; the majority of our infantry officers were badly trained; the tactical instruction of their units, left at the free-will of each individual when it was made at all, lacked method and intensive training. The steps of progress when the combat was engaged, the necessary infantry period, the permanent use of cover, the close liaison between infantry and artillery, formations diluted to the extreme limit under shell fire, carefully prepared instead of premature attacks, etc., etc., all these practices were forgotten because they were neglected in time of peace."[24]

Certainly, for the errors enumerated in the latter part of this sweeping condemnation it was the General Staff and those whom it directly commanded which was at fault, and not any Government.

Plan XVII. was defective because it eliminated all idea of manœuvre: and yet it was manœuvre which eventually won the battle of the Marne after the General Staff's theory of *l'offensive brutale et à l'outrance* had completely broken down on its first trial. It might possibly have had some chance of success against a weaker enemy. It had none whatever against one who was stronger in numbers and who in all material respects was better prepared.

This blind faith in a short war and a quick victory based on an offensive, and the consequent neglect of any provision for defensive warfare, led to an error of almost incalculable consequences. France drew about 90 per cent. of her ore production and 86 per cent. of her cast iron from the district of the Briey. Yet, incredible as it seems, the plan of concentration

did not provide any defence of that region.[25] It was left outside of the territory to be protected. Joffre himself, in giving evidence on this subject, said: "PLAN XVII., as well as preceding plans, left the Briey district outside of the zone to be occupied by the covering troops." The excuse proffered was that Briey was almost under the guns of Metz, and that its protection would have necessitated the investment of that fortified place—a difficult and dangerous operation. But that reply does not disclose the whole story. The report of the Commission sur la Métallurgie en France properly states that "the General Staff considered the problem of the Briey from an exclusively strategic point of view, upon the hypotheses of a short war, with an absolute faith in victory, and without having even contemplated the possibility of a reverse."[26]

If the General Staff had foreseen a four years' war it certainly would never have abandoned to the enemy the metal of which France had such sore need. But it could see only one thing—the necessity for an offensive. It did not take even elementary precautions to guard against the effect of a temporary check or defeat. In the result France was obliged to bring metals from across the seas to replace what had thus been given to the enemy. While Germany, on her own admission, was able to prolong the conflict as long as she did because these mines were in her possession. M. Loucheur has rightly said that the loss of Briey for the period of the war was a catastrophe.

The parliamentary commission appointed to examine why Briey was left unprotected drifted somewhat far afield in the course of its inquiry. It was thus that Joffre, Messimy, and others were given an opportunity to make what explanation they could or would of their mistakes of judgment or execution.

To do Messimy justice, he did not seek to diminish his own responsibility as Minister of War during part of the period preceding 1914. He told the Commission that from 1911 the violation of Belgian neutrality had been considered as certain, although it was thought that it would only be partial, and would not affect the heart of Belgium.[27] He admitted that it had been a great mistake not to make more use of the reserves. But he declined responsibility for the circulars of 1913 and 1914, whereby Joffre had authorised commanding officers, in their discretion, to reduce the number attached to each active regiment; and had likewise laid down that reservists should only be employed for secondary duties, such as keeping ways of communication and the guarding of prisoners.[28]

Finally, Messimy said that he thought it was useless to discuss whether, if it had to be done over again, he would "impose upon" Galliéni the post which the latter had "nobly refused" in 1911. He admitted that he was far from being "in rapt admiration" of Joffre, who in August, 1914, had been unable to realise that the German Right was turning his Left, and who after the battle of the Marne had persisted in useless partial attacks; but he summed him up as having a sure if slow mentality, and as possessing many of the qualities of a great chief.

Joffre's testimony upon the same points differed somewhat from that of Messimy, while it was neither so clear nor so convincing. The questions and answers are worth quoting, if only because they show that his main anxiety seems to have been rather to make no admission of error than to help the Commission by throwing light upon the past.

Referring to the fact that prior to 1914 Joffre had ignored

certain warnings, the President of the Commission said :—

> "It has been explained to us that the plan of concentration aroused the criticism of several members of the Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre, and notably of General Ruffey and General Galliéni, because it did not contemplate the hypothesis of the invasion by the left bank of the Meuse, and especially by Lille.
>
> "JOFFRE: That greatly astonishes me, since in the General Staff we always had that idea of the attack.
>
> "THE PRESIDENT: I did not have that impression when you read your memorandum, for, even allowing for the variant, Plan XVII. places the extreme Left of the French Army at Hirson. . . . It has been explained to us precisely that at the moment when you submitted this plan to the Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre General Ruffey and General Galliéni observed that it was disturbing, because in their opinion it was beyond discussion that the invasion of France would be by a large turning movement of the German Army, one which would embrace Lille and perhaps Dunkirk. Do you remember the remarks of General Ruffey and of General Galliéni?
>
> "JOFFRE: I have no recollection of them, but I do not say that they were not made.
>
> "THE PRESIDENT: At the very moment when the Three Years' law was discussed—and I remember it very well myself—observations were made to you regarding the hypothesis of the invasion by

way of Belgium, and the vast movement which was, in fact, executed. Did not that lead you to reflect that Plan XVII. was perhaps not sufficiently prudent?

"JOFFRE: All that is so vague that I cannot answer you."

Joffre's evidence regarding the reserves was equally imprecise. He was indeed forced to admit that he had given orders which allowed a reduction. But when he suggested that all the reserves were utilized, figures were placed before him showing irrefutably that at the outbreak of war the dépôts were crowded with reservists, and that, moreover, there was no provision of rifles for them. Joffre's only comment was, "I would not dare to contradict you; I do not say either yes or no."

Equally fruitless were the efforts of the Commission to discover who were the authors of the plan of operations. No one seemed desirous to claim that distinction. Joffre's testimony is at least curious, if not illuminating:

"THE PRESIDENT: Was the plan of operations discussed by the Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre?

"JOFFRE: No, that is not the business of the Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre.

"THE PRESIDENT: How, then, was the plan of operations elaborated?

"JOFFRE: The plan of concentration is the function of the plan of operations.

"THE PRESIDENT: By whom was the plan of operations elaborated?

"Joffre: By the General Staff of the Army under my direction.

"The President: General de Castelnau has testified that as Sub-Chief of the General Staff he was ignorant of the plan of operations.

"Joffre: I cannot tell you about that.

"The President: Who elaborated the plan of operations, and who collaborated with you in this work if the first Sub-Chief of the General Staff did not have any part in it?

"Joffre: My recollections are too imprecise for me to answer you. If General de Castelnau has told you that he was ignorant of it, it must be so.

"The President: I looked over his deposition again this morning, because this detail had struck me, and I desired to put the question to you?

"Joffre: I don't remember.

"The President: Who took part in elaborating the plan of operations?

"Joffre: I don't remember.

"The President: It seems that you ought to be able to remember the officers with whom you worked; it was, in brief, a matter which must have caused you a great deal of worry.

"Joffre: But all the General Staff participated. A plan of operations is an idea that one has in one's head, but that one does not put on paper."

> The examination on this point proceeded for some time with no further result, until Joffre finally declared, "You are asking me a bundle of things which I can't answer. I know nothing."

Much clearer is what actually did happen. The war found the General Staff firm and consistent in its adhesion to the doctrine that an offensive should be persisted in, even if based upon incomplete information. An ill-advised advance was made, and the first practical result of these teachings began to be seen. According to M. Hanotaux (who may be regarded as an official historian of the Grand Quartier Général[29]), "mad bayonet charges were launched at a distance of a mile from the enemy without artillery preparation"; and the ill-regulated spirit of the offensive was one of the causes of the French reverses.

But the General Staff clung to its erroneous preconceptions in the face of facts which convinced everyone else.

In April, 1914, General Lanrezac had been appointed to succeed Galliéni (who had then reached the age limit) on the Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre; and the following month he received an order which invested him with the command of the Fifth Army in the event of war. This was the army which, according to Plan XVII., held the French Left. Lanrezac did his utmost to persuade Joffre to give him the First Army (the army of the Vosges), on the ground that as he had been its Chief-of-Staff for five years he was thoroughly familiar with that theatre of operations. When Joffre refused to do so he began to study the situation in the north. He soon arrived at the conclusion that the Germans would unblushingly violate the neutrality of Belgium, and, making the most of that act, would come by the left bank of the Meuse.

After Lanrezac had taken the command of the Fifth Army in August, 1914, he discerned indications which confirmed this opinion. He was convinced that the German Right was stronger than Plan XVII. had anticipated it would be, and that it meant to make a turning movement by the left bank of the Meuse. On August 7th he sent his Chief-of-Staff to communicate this opinion to Joffre. But the only reply he got was that the "responsibility of stopping a turning movement against his Left was not his." On August 8th Joffre actually issued an order for "an offensive of all forces united, with the Right flank on the Rhine." The rôle of the Fifth Army was left undecided; but it was to be ready for either an offensive or defensive facing east.

Another order from the Grand Quartier Général, on August 13th, showed that Joffre still thought that the danger lay in the east. On the following day Lanrezac himself went to see the Commander-in-Chief to urge his belief that an overwhelming German attack would come by the left bank of the Meuse. Joffre replied, "We have a feeling that the Germans have nothing ready on that side"; a view likewise expressed by his Chief-of-Staff.

During all this period Lanrezac's advice was received with equal scepticism, whether he sent it by one of his staff or himself spoke to Joffre. Various incidents show that the General Staff thought Lanrezac was a nuisance, while he thought that they were fools; and that neither took any pains to conceal their respective convictions.

On August 15th Lanrezac was finally allowed to make preparations for the possible execution of the movement towards the north which he had urged as a necessary measure of safety. But even on August 16th Joffre was responsible for a proclamation in which it was stated that the German attack by

way of Belgium had "lamentably failed."[30]

While as late as August 18th or 19th General Berthelot, the real director of operations, telephoned to the Minister of War, Messimy (who was getting anxious about the Left): "The more we have against our Left the better it will be, as it will give us more chance to break their Centre." For, as Galliéni had discovered when he spent some hours at the Grand Quartier Général on August 14th, Joffre and his subordinates were obsessed by the idea that they would break the German Centre and then make a turning movement against the German Right: an idea which was Napoleonic in its conception, but in nothing else, for it was based upon ignorance of or deceptive information respecting the enemy's forces and plans.

The battle of Charleroi completed the demolition of the strategy of the General Staff, and forced Joffre to abandon Plan XVII. As Sir John French soon discovered, he was not immediately able to substitute another in its place.

It has been stated that after that engagement the British retreated before the French. But it is now definitely established that the contrary was the case. M. Gabriel Hanotaux has, indeed, written that the British order was given at five p.m. on August 23rd, and Lanrezac's order only at nine p.m. But he omitted to state that while it was Joffre who telegraphed to the British Commander-in-Chief warning him of the extent of von Klück's pressure, and announcing the French retreat, the latter retirement had already actually begun at that hour; while the British only commenced to retreat on the morning of August 24th, after fighting all night. French was so much taken aback by this proceeding that when, during a meeting at Compiègne, on August 29th, he was urged to co-operate in a certain movement,

he recalled with feeling that only some days earlier the Fifth Army had commenced to fall back hours before Joffre had communicated to him that he had been forced to abandon his plan.

On the contrary M. Fernand Engerand has written that "the retreat of the British followed ours, and did not precede it: it is a duty of loyalty to say so, as also to admit that in the frontier battles the British Army, which its commander put on the defensive, was the only one, besides the French First Army, which could hold the enemy."[31]

M. Hanotaux, however, has repeated his mis-statements in the face of various corrections. But the eminent academician can no longer be taken as an unprejudiced authority on this subject. In its report the Commission sur la Métallurgie pointed out[32] that he may be regarded as an official historian of the General Staff. As such he might have employed his time to better advantage had he explained how it was that practically at the same time that Joffre advised the British of the danger and of the French retreat, which was then in progress, he telegraphed (at 4.40 p.m.) to Lanrezac in the following terms: "I request you to give me your opinion on the situation and what you count upon doing. You are in touch with Marshal French. How do you regard the situation, and what support is he able to give you?"

The Commission sur la Métallurgie concluded,[33] with great reason, that these two messages are "absolutely contradictory," and that they give rise to "an obscure point which history will have to elucidate."

The General Staff subsequently blamed Lanrezac for ordering the retreat (as he did on his own responsibility) and breaking off the conflict of Charleroi. That criticism may be left

on one side with the remark that it has given rise to a dispute which bids fair never to be settled. Lanrezac's supporters contend that by his action he avoided a second Sedan. While the report of the Commission sur la Métallurgie says, without qualification, that "the battle of Charleroi was lost before it was begun; the great merit of the Commander of the Fifth Army was to have dared to prevent it from turning to a disaster and to have taken upon himself to break the battle before the whole left wing of the Allies was enveloped."

Upon the other hand, Lanrezac's opponents contend that the battle was never really engaged, and that he avoided it.

Before the war Lanrezac had achieved fame as a military professor. He was one of the oracles of the French Army, although his theories were in contradiction with the doctrine of the offensive *à l'outrance*, to which the General Staff was wedded. Moreover, as has been shown, he was equally at variance with the views of the General Staff about the German plan of campaign. Events proved that he was right and the General Staff wrong.

On September 3rd Lanrezac was relieved of his command. The reason given by one who apparently spoke for Joffre was that he did not adopt the views of the General Staff, while M. Hanotaux has written that it was because of his lack of liaison with the English. Certainly Lanrezac made an unfavourable impression upon Sir John French, with whom he had several unpleasant clashes. While his ejaculation on August 29th, when Haig (acting under French's orders) did not give him the support which he had conditionally offered, was something worse than indiscreet.[34] But though French and Lanrezac were temperamentally antipathetic the one to the other, the root of the

evil (as Lanrezac has since admitted) was that French, unknown to him, was bound by his instructions never to place himself under the orders of any Allied general, and was restrained by the warning that he could not count upon any great or speedy reinforcements.

In considering the case of Lanrezac, it must be remembered that even M. Hanotaux, the apologist for the General Staff, has written that "from the outset General Lanrezac insistently indicated the danger of a turning movement by Lower Belgium, but the Command was intent upon holding to its conception of an advance against the enemy's Centre."

But even if a Commander-in-Chief is wrong in his strategy, he cannot afford to have a lieutenant who is inclined to discuss rather than to execute his orders. It is at least questionable whether Lanrezac, although undoubtedly a great and brilliant military theorist, is capable of leading troops in the field. The late General de Maud'huy proclaimed vigorously that Lanrezac had proved his worth in this respect while he commanded the Fifth Army in August, 1914. Certainly his action in breaking off the battle of Charleroi showed that he was willing to shoulder responsibility. Possibly that course avoided a great disaster. But equally certainly it showed more prudence on Lanrezac's part than he had exhibited during the earlier days of the campaign, when he urged Joffre to allow him to sally northwards. While I am bound to add that the only member of his staff with whom I have had an opportunity to discuss the matter stated vigorously and in detail that, although Lanrezac's preconceived theories were undoubtedly right, he impressed him, after the first few days of the campaign, as temperamentally unfitted to command in the field in time of war.[35]

On August 25th Joffre acknowledged the failure of his plan by issuing a General Instruction, stating that it had been found impossible to execute the projected offensive. It is regrettable for his own fame that then and later he attempted to place the blame upon those who had done their best to execute his orders, and who had sacrificed themselves or who had been sacrificed in attempting to carry out the plans of the General Staff. All the generals commanding and their subordinates were not incompetent; nor was there any serious fault to be found with the troops. But the General Staff's strategy had broken down at all points. All attempts since made to rehabilitate it have been of the weakest nature. The majority of French military critics admit, more or less openly, the vital defects in Plan XVII. They wisely think that there is glory enough for the French Army in the great strategic successes of the latter part of the war. But occasionally some of Joffre's friends make a feeble effort to prove that the General Staff was not guilty of any faulty dispositions. A recent instance of this kind was an article by General Dupont in *La Revue Militaire Française*.[36] The whole burden of his excuse may be summed up by saying that the General Staff thought that Belgium would make some compromise with Germany, and that the violation of the former's territory would only be partial. He advances several interesting reasons which the General Staff had for holding that belief. But he seems to be unaware that he is thereby not refuting the charge of the basic error, but on the contrary is confirming it. Much more to the point is the judgment of Lieutenant-Colonel Grouard, who, in the same number of *La Revue Militaire Française*,[36] makes the categorical pronouncement that "le haut commandement français avait fait preuve d'un défaut absolu de sens stratégique."

In giving evidence before the Commission sur la Métallurgie Joffre asserted that the battle of the Marne was the outcome of a plan which he had conceived on August 25th. The report of the evidence shows that the President of the Commission was not disposed to agree with that statement. Nor does it seem to accord with the facts as known. It is on record that after Charleroi, after Joffre had admitted the compulsory abandonment of his offensive, Sir John French tried, and tried in vain, to find out from him what was his new plan. Joffre's enigmatic reply at St. Quentin, on August 26th, certainly did not correspond to what French had the right to expect. While it was, indeed, French himself who was the first to propose that a stand should be made on the Marne. On September 1st he submitted a memorandum embodying this plan, which Joffre rejected on the following day as being impracticable under existing conditions.

In any event, the necessary precedent of the Marne was the Battle of the Ourcq, which was engaged by Galliéni and the troops which were defending Paris.

It was precisely on August 25th, at 11.30 a.m., that Joffre received an imperative order from the Minister of War (Messimy) that if he was forced to retreat he should detach three corps for the defence of Paris. For the Government, which had been careful not to interfere with the Commander-in-Chief, and which had been kept in complete ignorance by him, began to be alarmed about the safety of the capital; and all the more so because, when Galliéni had spent a day at the Grand Quartier Général, Joffre's Chief-of-Staff had contemptuously intimated that the fate of Paris was of little account:[37] "Une ville comme toutes les autres."

M. Maurice Viollette, the Chairman of the Commission sur

la Métallurgie, seemed to believe that Joffre had only acted upon compulsion in allotting troops for the defence of Paris, although the latter persisted in affirming that this order had not in any way influenced his conduct. That statement is in absolute disaccord with the report of General Hirschauer (who was sent at this juncture to visit the General Staff) that the order was resented: which is confirmed by Messimy. While opinion is not unanimous, there is no general belief in military circles, either in France or elsewhere, that the retreat was part of a strategic plan which ended in the battle of the Marne. Neither M. Hanotaux's somewhat ecstatic account, nor the more sober narrative issued by the General Staff some months later, carries any conviction. The latter is a glaring example of a work written with one eye on posterity.[38] An unprejudiced French authority —Lieutenant-Colonel de Thomasson—has pronounced it to be interesting only subsequent to its relation to the battle of the Marne, the account of the initial plan of campaign and of the frontier battles being almost unintelligible and manifestly prejudiced.

In the period between the collapse of Plan XVII. and the battle of the Marne, Joffre's greatest value as Commander in Chief of the French Armies was clearly shown. For if his primary errors and subsequent obstinacy were responsible for the disasters which delivered to the enemy nine of the richest departments of France and affected the whole course of the war, yet his imperturbable calmness was effective in preventing a difficult and dangerous retreat from developing into something more calamitous.

General Mangin has written that in the battle of the Marne there is glory enough for both Galliéni and Joffre.

Apparently the latter was of a different opinion. For a year later, in 1915, irritated and provoked by the fact that many persisted in giving the major credit to Galliéni, he endeavoured to fix the latter's rôle by giving him the following citation:—

> "Galliéni, Général, Gouverneur Militaire et Commandant des Armées de Paris:
>
> "Commandant du Camp Retranché et des armée de Paris, et placé le 2 Septembre, sous les ordres du Commandant-en-Chef, à fait preuve des plus hautes qualités militaires:
>
> "En contribuant, par les renseignements qu'il avait recueillis, à déterminer la direction de marche prise par l'aile droite allemande.
>
> "En orientant judicieusement pour participer à la bataille les forces mobiles à sa disposition.
>
> "En facilitant par tous les moyens en son pouvoir l'accomplissement de la mission assignée par le Commandant-en-Chef à ces forces mobiles."

It is indisputable that this citation is ungenerous in its terms. But the bulk of opinion goes further. The general judgment seems to be that it does not present fairly or accurately the part taken by Galliéni, and that it was a deliberate attempt to deprecate what he had actually done. The only permanent result has been an unpleasant impression that Joffre was unduly jealous of anyone sharing the glory.

Galliéni had a letter of service which designated him as Joffre's eventual successor as Commander-in-Chief. But Joffre told the Minister of War that he did not care to have him at the Grand Quartier Général; and he was therefore left in Paris,

doing little or nothing. Later Galliéni was entrusted with the defence of Paris; and from a conversation he had with Joffre by telephone, on August 30th, he got the idea that the latter considered the capital was doomed.

It was undoubtedly Galliéni who first saw the opportunity to check the enemy. In 1920 M. Poincaré disclosed that on September 3rd, 1914, the evening before he issued the order to Maunoury to attack the German flank, Galliéni had telegraphed to the Government at Bordeaux stating that he thought there was a good opening. M. Poincaré added: "It is therefore certain that the Commander-in-Chief of the Armies of Paris had spontaneously, from the first moment, a clear vision of the battle to be engaged."[39]

On the other hand, Joffre's General Order No. 48 (which arrived at Verdun on September 4th) referred to a renewal of the general offensive being undertaken "in some days." This coincides with a complaint attributed to Joffre, that Galliéni's action had forced him to fight before he was ready to do so. Moreover, in rejecting Sir John French's suggestion that a stand should be made on the Marne, Joffre had written, on September 2nd, that "On account of events which have taken place during the last two days, I do not believe it possible at present to contemplate a general manœuvre on the Marne with the totality of our forces."[40]

Undoubtedly had the Battle of the Marne been lost Joffre and the General Staff would have been blamed. It is, therefore, manifestly unfair to seek to deprive them of credit for that victory. But, without Galliéni, there would have been no Battle of the Ourcq; and without the Battle of the Ourcq there would have been no Battle of the Marne.[41] The facts justify

Clemenceau, who, on November 11th, 1918, in announcing the Armistice to the Chambre des Députés, said: “Without Galliéni the victory would have been impossible.”

But the real victors of the Battle of the Marne were the men, French and English,[42] who, after suffering for weeks from the dire effects of the false strategy, the faulty preparations, and the imperfect information of the General Staff, did all and more than was asked of them.

Von Klück, in explaining why he changed the direction of his Army, throws this salient fact into clearer relief than does any French writer.[43]

He had followed the theory of the younger von Moltke (which had, indeed, been emphasized at a Kriegspiel a couple of years earlier) that a fortified camp should not be attacked until the armies in the field had been overwhelmed; while undoubtedly Galliéni did not play the game according to the German rule when he himself ventured forth without having been attacked. But while making an allowance for that surprise von Klück said: “If you want the material reasons of our check, look in the newspapers of the day: they will tell you about lack of munitions, about a defective commissariat: all that is exact. But there is a reason which transcends all the others; a reason which, in my opinion, is entirely decisive. It is the extraordinary and peculiar aptitude of the French soldier to recover quickly. That is a factor which it is difficult to translate into figures, and which, consequently, upsets the most precise and far-seeing calculations. That men may stand fast and be killed is an understood thing which is discounted in every plan of battle. But that men who have retreated during ten days, that men sleeping on the ground and half dead with fatigue, should be able to take

up their rifles and attack when the bugle sounds, is a thing upon which we never counted. It was a possibility of which there was never any question in our schools of war.”

CHAPTER III.

The Fall of Joffre

Shortly after the Battle of the Marne the French Grand Quartier Général was established at Chantilly. There it remained so long as Joffre was Commander-in-Chief, the first of several moves being made soon after he was succeeded by Nivelle.

Joffre's supercession in December, 1916, had consequences which affected not only the conduct of the war, but, indirectly, the relations between the Allies. An examination of the causes of that change, and of the incidents which led up to it, is therefore pertinent.

The Battle of the Marne obliterated, for the moment, all recollection of the failure of the strategy of the General Staff. Joffre's unfortunate persistence in his mistake about the German plans was likewise forgotten. To be deceived about what the enemy is going to do is often the most fatal of errors. But in the course of human events it is also the most common. Any other general might have been equally deluded. But Joffre did what no other French general could have done during the long and disastrous retreat. It was said of him by one of his officers that, "Il distillait la confiance et la tranquillité comme d'autres distillent l'inquiétude et l'agitation." That was the quality which, to some extent, was responsible for the unbroken morale of the soldier in the line, which so greatly surprised von Klück.

But Joffre's habit of disclosing nothing and of refusing to discuss anything was even more notable in time of war than it had been in days of peace.

On the morning of August 3rd, 1914, the generals who were in command of the various French armies were summoned to the rue St. Dominique to meet the Commander-in-Chief. After the usual salutations General Dubail, who commanded the First Army, got up and pointed out that during the offensive of his army against Strasbourg he would need strong forces to cover his Right and Rear along the left bank of the Upper Rhine.

Joffre simply answered: "This plan is yours; it is not mine."

Dubail, thinking that Joffre had not understood him, again explained his point. But Joffre, according to Lanrezac, "his face beaming with his customary benevolent smile," replied in exactly the same words. There was general embarrassment, and the conference ended. "One of my colleagues, visibly moved," records Lanrezac, "asked me, in confidence, whether I thought that General Joffre had an idea. I replied 'Yes' without hesitation, but my mind was clouded by a doubt."[44]

At Chantilly Joffre was equally taciturn and secretive. But the disasters of the first few weeks had had their effect. No more was heard of an offensive *à l'outrance*. That doctrine was definitely abandoned, nor were there any further instructions about artillery following the infantry; on the contrary, it was now specifically laid down that the artillery should prepare the way for infantry attacks.

In his general idea Joffre seemed to go from one extreme to the other. While at Chantilly he did not want to take any risk. His sole belief was in the guerre d'usure; and valuable time and

more valuable lives were wasted in many fruitless and partial attacks. For Joffre was convinced that the war was already won, and that it was only necessary to let time do its work in order to witness the collapse of Germany.[45] When a certain plan was proposed, involving the construction of factories for munitions or artillery, Joffre protested that, as the work would take the better part of a year, it was useless to begin it, since the war would be won before the end of that period.

That Joffre was not generous, and perhaps not even just, was shown by his treatment of Galliéni. He was jealous of any possible rival, and always careful lest he should be supplanted. When de Castelnau was appointed Major-General, he insisted that, before he was sent to Chantilly, his powers should be more limited than the Government had proposed. While when de Castelnau actually arrived at the Grand Quartier Général he was practically isolated and left with little or nothing to do. Joffre did not even let the Government into his full confidence, and during the operations of September, 1914, he wrote to Galliéni warning him against communicating anything to the Cabinet, which was then at Bordeaux.

On the other hand, he arrogated to himself the right to correspond with Allied Governments entirely independently of the French Government; and upon one occasion at least this course nearly caused grave trouble with Italy. In his plenitude of power, he dealt penalties and gave rewards, and was certainly not sparing of the former. The number of Generals whom he "limogéd" is almost incredible. It is fair to add that he was quite impartial, and that only military considerations and not political persuasions were ever taken into account.

He himself was an avowed Republican; and a Freemason

whom the Grand Orient had felicitated upon his promotion in 1911. A Frenchman of high standing in the political world and a close friend of Joffre's who went to see him at Chantilly once sang to me the praises of the Commander-in-Chief, ending by saying: "et surtout il est un bon republicain."

But if Joffre's friends made that a point in his favour, he himself was never influenced by it in dealing with others; although one of the chronicles of Chantilly does state that he once got angry because there was no meat on the table on Good Friday. Nor, like Sarrail, did he ever try to make capital out of his republicanism.

But while he never played politics, he was, as André Tardieu once observed, "a born deputy," as those who intrigued against him more than once discovered. He knew how to make and how to keep friends in the political world for his own protection. Perhaps the most potent and the most active of these was M. Huc, Director of *La Dépêche de Toulouse*, a journal which, on account of its wide electoral influence in several Departments, has always more power upon the Government of the day than almost any Parisian newspaper.

The members of Joffre's Staff were firmly attached to him. They were indeed too ardent, and in the end harmed him. He himself was by no means indifferent to his own renown. During the months when he was at Chantilly after the Battle of the Marne, presents poured in upon him from every part of the globe, while letters from those calling him the saviour of the world to those which only made some trivial request came by the thousands. M. de Pierrefeu says that Joffre shut himself up by the hour reading these missives—a statement which it is somewhat difficult to accept.

So long as Millerand was Minister of War Joffre was secure. No complaint against him got any consideration whatever. But in October, 1915, Galliéni succeeded Millerand in the Briand Cabinet. It was only a few weeks earlier (on September 25th) that Joffre had issued the ungenerous and misleading citation in the Ordre de l'Armée regarding Galliéni's conduct in September, 1914. This citation was given a year after the Battle of the Marne in order to check the eulogies of Galliéni's foresight which, to Joffre's annoyance, were still being widely spread.

But when in office Galliéni did not once show that he had any personal resentment on account of this or other incidents. Upon every occasion when he mentioned Joffre's name in debate it was to defend or to praise him.

The first difference of opinion between the Minister of War and the Commander-in-Chief arose in December, 1915, when Colonel Driant was at his own request heard by the Army Commission of the Chambre des Députés. Driant was both a soldier by profession and also Deputy for Nancy. Incidentally he was the son-in-law of General Boulanger. He told the Commission that the Verdun district, where he commanded a sector, was entirely unprepared to resist any attack. The Commission communicated this startling statement to Galliéni, who was all the more moved by it because he was aware of Driant's worth. On December 16th he wrote to Joffre saying that the Government had received accounts to the effect that in certain regions, amongst others Verdun, the necessary trench work had not yet been done. He asked for an assurance that upon all points of the Front the organisation of at least two lines had been completed, and enforced by barbed wire and other obstacles.

On December 18th Joffre replied that orders had been given on October 22nd; that their execution had been constantly controlled; and that at the places mentioned there were three or four successive positions of defence, either finished or on the way to completion. Having given this assurance, Joffre complained of the Government attaching any credence to such reports; asked to be told who had made them; and threatened to resign if he was again troubled in that manner. Galliéni wrote a letter which by its tone alone should have given satisfaction to Joffre, and the incident seemed closed.

But Driant was right and Joffre was wrong. In January, 1916, when de Castelnau returned from Salonica, Joffre sent him to inspect Verdun. He found that the defences were entirely insufficient, and gave orders that a regiment of engineers should be despatched to do the necessary work. Unfortunately, the Germans did not wait, but attacked on February 21st, and carried all before them. It was in this combat that Colonel Driant was killed while he was trying himself to safeguard the retreat of his men.

I am referring to the Battle of Verdun simply to show to what extent it affected Joffre. It is therefore only necessary to recall that on February 24th, after Joffre, following his usual custom, had gone to bed early, the news became increasingly grave. De Castelnau wanted to see Joffre, but the officer on duty did not wish to awaken the Commander-in-Chief. But as the news became more serious de Castelnau returned to Joffre's villa and insisted. When the latter had read the despatches he agreed that de Castelnau should go at once to Verdun, and invested him with full powers. The latter arrived there the following morning, after passing through scenes which bore witness that growing disaster threatened to become a panic; and, after doing what he

could to restore confidence, summoned Pétain.

When details came from Verdun the Government realised that the assurance given in Joffre's letter of December 18th had had no solid foundation. Verdun was not fortified as he had said it was. Galliéni was especially affected by this discovery. It confirmed him in the view which he had long held, that there should be some definite control over the High Command. On March 7th he read at a Cabinet meeting a memorandum, the gist of which was that steps should be taken to limit Joffre's power and to prevent him from usurping the functions of the Minister of War. Briand, who, for national reasons, wished to retain Joffre, would have liked Galliéni to withdraw this document. But the latter persisted in demanding that consideration should be given to his recommendation. When Galliéni found himself unable to obtain satisfaction he resigned, being succeeded by General Roques, who was known to be friendly to Joffre.

There had already been numerous attacks upon Joffre from outside, and throughout his opponents had been pressing the Government to limit his powers, if not virtually to dispossess him of the supreme command. During March and April, 1915, anonymous memoranda had been sent to various deputies and others. Presumably an effort was made to sow the seed upon fertile soil. But sometimes the judgment of the authors was at fault, and their compilations fell into the wrong hands. These accusatory reports criticised Joffre unfairly, both for what he had done and for what he had neglected to do. They further complained that it was improper that he should appoint to the high commands without any control on the part of the Government; and alleged that those to whom he had given armies were for the greater part not good Republicans. The tendency of these documents was to assert that there was only

one general to whom, both for military and political reasons, the Republic could safely entrust the conduct of the war—Sarrail. The internal evidence makes it clear that these reports must have been the work of someone on, or in close communication with, Sarrail's staff. Although, as M. Mirmeix has justly remarked, it would be unfair, in the absence of any proof, to presume that they were written or distributed with the knowledge or assent of that general.

But what some were thus spreading secretly others were saying more openly. Finally, in a letter to Briand, dated November 18th, 1915, M. Léon Accambray, deputy for Laon, advanced practically the same charges, with the addition of a direct eulogy of Sarrail. Accambray reiterated this when speaking in the Chambre des Députés. But Briand, who, as a persuasive parliamentarian, has no equal in France, was determined to retain Joffre. He used his influence over the Chambre, while at the same time he gave some more or less illusory satisfaction by making certain changes in the composition not of the Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre, but in that of the Conseil Supérieur de la Défense Nationale.

In reality this left Joffre's position unchanged, while, as a matter of fact, his authority had recently been extended. In July, 1915, Joffre had removed Sarrail from the command of the Third Army, after the circulation of the secret memoranda (March-April, 1915), but before Accambray's letter to Briand. Sarrail's political friends (and he had always been active in politics) had made every effort to get him reinstated, but Joffre had held firm. The Government had, therefore, in August, 1915, given Sarrail the command of the Army of the Orient, the formation of which began from that time. Joffre was unwilling to lessen his forces by allowing troops to go to Salonica. In his

view it would have been unwise to run any risk of weakening the Western Front by sending men to reinforce such an expedition. Moreover, Lord Kitchener, then Minister of War, upon his return from Greece, in November, 1915, had pronounced absolutely against the proposed army. The question was to be finally decided at a conference of the Allies on December 4th. Briand, to whom history will give full credit for the Salonica expedition, showed his habitual cleverness. By one and the same stroke both secured the active support of Joffre at Calais (which doubtless turned the scale, although it did not then convince Kitchener), and satisfied Joffre's susceptibilities about an independent army in the East; for on the eve of the conference Joffre was named Commander-in-Chief of all the French Armies, which thus again made Sarrail his subordinate.

So long as it was a matter of political manœuvring against the friends of Sarrail and against those who thought that Joffre's powers were too extensive, and his conduct too arbitrary, Briand was still able to control the situation. Nevertheless, Joffre's position was no longer the same. Galliéni had been a tower of strength, for his testimony in favour of the Commander-in-Chief was that of a soldier whose eminent services and brilliant talents were unquestioned—who had no political connections—and who, as was well known, had little reason to be friendly to Joffre or to the Grand Quartier Général. But, precisely for the same reason, the fact that he had finally demanded the curtailment of Joffre's activities, and had resigned because Briand did not support him on that point, had undermined Joffre's position—and more so than was at first apparent. Roques had not the same military reputation; while his very friendship with Joffre was rather a source of weakness in the Chambre, until his favourable report on Sarrail (whose army

he had gone to inspect at the demand of the Allies in November, 1916) had silenced the latter's friends.

Nevertheless, Briand would probably have been able to maintain Joffre had it not been for the Battle of the Somme. For it is a curious fact that the cumulative effect of Verdun and of the Somme were (though for very different reasons) responsible for the removal of Joffre on the one side, and on the other of Falkenhayn, who was succeeded by Hindenburg and Ludendorf.

The disappointment in France at the result of the Battle of the Somme solidified the feeling that the country could not continue to stand the deadly but unproductive warfare of which Joffre was the admitted protagonist. In some quarters he was also now blamed for the Roumanian fiasco. The irritation that no effective control should have been exercised over the military adventures of a country which the Allies had aided both with supplies and technical missions was natural. But there were reasons, clear, if not at first obvious, why the Roumanians were pretty well bound to have their own way. While, moreover, they had had a right to count upon that promised Russian assistance which had not been forthcoming. In any event it was unjust to hold Joffre responsible for what happened merely because he commanded all the French Armies, and had sent to Roumania General Berthelot, who had been his right arm at the Battle of the Marne.

Briand, however, had no longer to meet either secret or flimsy charges. He was faced with facts and with a current of public opinion, supported by such men as Paul Doumer, whose close connection with Galliéni, during the siege of Paris, did not make him any more favourable to Joffre.

If Briand could have had his own way he would have

retained Joffre while restricting his powers, as he had always been willing to do so far as possible. It is doubtful whether, at this period, he had any great faith in Joffre as a military genius, or in the correctness of his mode of warfare. But he realized, as he had always done, that Joffre was an invaluable asset on account of the effect his name and personality had on the Allies. Above all, he thought that if unity of command were ever feasible, it would be easier to get the Allies to accept it under Joffre than under any other French General. How well founded was this belief was proved by the fact that when, eighteen months later, the question of a unique commander was being actively discussed, Colonel House, who represented President Wilson, at once suggested Joffre, although the latter had taken no part in the direction of the war during the previous campaign. But with his keen sense of political atmosphere Briand felt that this time it would be impossible to cover Joffre fully. Therefore, before the secret session of November 28th, 1916, he did his utmost to persuade the latter to agree to relinquish the direct command of the armies, while accepting some other and less well-defined post. But even to Briand, most seductive of statesmen, Joffre was adamant. He wanted what he had or nothing at all. He refused to resign. Let Briand remove him if he wished to do so. These sterile interviews succeeded each other for days; some being held at the Elysée in the presence of Poincaré. In the meantime the secret session continued, but it was impossible to make any progress before Joffre's future was settled. Finally, on December 3rd, 1916, Joffre yielded. The next day Briand told the Chambre des Députés that Joffre was to leave Chantilly for Paris, that a new Commander of the Armies of the North and North-East would be appointed (who would have no control over the Army of the Orient); and that the powers of the Grand Quartier Général were to be restricted.

Upon this declaration the Chambre gave the Government the vote of confidence which Briand needed.

A Presidential Decree of December 13th defined, but somewhat vaguely, Joffre's future duties: "Le Général Joffre, Commandant-en-Chef des Armées Françaises, remplit auprès du Gouvernement le rôle de conseiller technique en, ce qui concerne la direction de la Guerre."

It had been intended that Joffre should still retain most of his staff. A large house had been taken at Neuilly and was being put in order to receive them. Those who were to accompany the General had already arranged to leave Chantilly on a fixed day. But although Briand had come to terms with the Chambre he had still to get the assent of the Senate. The news of Joffre's proposed installation with his staff, against whom there had been so many complaints, was received unfavourably by Paul Doumer and his friends. It was thought that it would simply mean Chantilly in Neuilly: that the Government would not have that control, and that Nivelle (who, on December 13th, had been named to succeed Joffre in command of the Armies of the North and North-East) would not have that freedom of action which Parliament desired. The secret sessions of the Senate were held between December 19th and 23rd. Briand recognised the determination of the majority. He therefore assured the Senate that Joffre would have no further independent power; and that instead of going to Neuilly he was to be at the Hôtel des Invalides with a small secretariat. Upon this statement he obtained the vote.

Briand, whose political position was already weakened, had placed the resignation of his Ministry in the hands of the President, and had received permission to form a new

Government. This he had done on December 11th, having a small Cabinet, with General Lyautey as Minister of War. The latter only arrived from Morocco some time later. He at once refused to take possession of his office on the ground that after his appointment, but before his arrival, certain steps had been taken without his knowledge and for which he would not accept responsibility. Amongst other things he complained of the appointment of Joffre as the Technical Adviser to the Government. In his opinion that was the natural function of the Minister of War, or of those whom he might call into consultation.

Upon the other hand, it would seem that Joffre was not contented with his anomalous position, and that indirectly he made some overtures to secure the bâton of a maréchal of France, which had some weeks earlier been held out as a bait by Briand in his attempt to secure his resignation. Advantage was taken of this opening, and Joffre was relieved of the office he had held for less than two weeks: about the only thing he had done was to remove Foch from his command upon the plea that he needed a rest. On December 26th a Presidential Decree named Joffre Maréchal of France, the first maréchal created by the Third French Republic.

From that day Joffre had no further part in the conduct of the war.

Of the extent of Joffre's capacity it is difficult to judge.

His calmness is as legendary as his taciturnity. He slept soundly during the most trying times. The late M. Etienne, once Minister of War, and always friendly to Joffre, acquired during the Battle of Verdun the habit of telephoning to Chantilly every evening about eleven o'clock. Needless to say, Joffre had then

been asleep for some hours: an invariable answer which always satisfied M. Etienne. Equally well known is the story of how one day in August, 1914, he was lunching at British Headquarters when Sir John French (who had been singularly unsuccessful in trying to make Joffre talk about his plans) was called away suddenly by the news that part of his army was in a desperate position: and Joffre remained and calmly finished his own luncheon.

But these qualities of silence and impassivity which were at times an undoubted asset, were also perhaps at other moments injurious to his reputation. Not only did he say little but it seemed to be a positive effort for him to talk. One of Kitchener's colleagues in the Cabinet has mentioned that he was so silent that he generally appeared dense, if not stupid: but that from time to time, very occasionally—he made a remark which was like a brilliant flash of lightning in the darkness—it illuminated everything for an instant. But Joffre's silence was more complete, more consistent, and more stolid than that. It is therefore difficult to say whether it covered any original creative ideas. The impression which he gave to Lanrezac and other army commanders on August 2nd, 1914, was that it probably did not. His own evidence before the Commission sur la Métallurgie, and especially when attempts were made to find out how far he was responsible for the plan of 1914, and to what extent he had prepared for any eventualities, was lamentable.

Joffre certainly was a formidable personage. But he was impressive partly because he did not and could not be made to talk, even when he might reasonably be expected to do so. His failure, or possibly his inability, to do so upon these latter occasions sometimes appeared to his personal disadvantage;

and raised the doubt as to whether his silence originated entirely in his love of secrecy or in the fact that there was really nothing behind it which he could produce.

It is curious to compare with this the characteristic way in which Foch converses. It was quite typical that on the historic day of the Doullens meeting he should have spoken as follows: "Heu! Vous connaissez ma méthode. Heu! Je colle un pain à cacheter là, puis un là, puis un autre là—le Boche n'avance presque plus. J'en colle encore un. Et le Boche est fixé. On fixe toujours le Boche."[46]

This difference between Joffre's and Foch's style of conversation was entirely illustrative of the diversity of their ideas about the way in which the war should be prosecuted. Foch's words picture graphically his mode of annoying the enemy, until he could seize the favourable moment to crush him. Joffre, on the other hand, believed in the guerre d'usure. He pinned his faith absolutely to wearing out the Germans on the Western Front. In this he resembled Sir William Robertson. But Robertson always thought that the war would last some time, and was never at any moment confident that victory was near—if only because there were too many wicked politicians in the world: whereas it was one of Joffre's fixed ideas that he was always on the point of winning the war, and that therefore it was unnecessary to provide for what might happen a year or so ahead.

In the course of time it was seen that Joffre's policy of warfare was likely to prove more fatal to his own country than to the enemy: and this conviction led to the downfall of the victor of the Marne.

CHAPTER IV.

The Nivelle Offensive

"En 1915 nous avons marché comme des enfants, en 1916 comme des vieillards: il faut enfin marcher comme des hommes."

That was the current saying towards the end of 1916. But to do that—to get away from the guerre d'usure—it was necessary to find a successor to Joffre.

Many things had to be taken into consideration in making that choice, some of them not of a military nature. The French Legislature has a far closer control over the Army in time of war than has the British Parliament. Both the Chambre des Députés and the Sénat have Army commissions which do active work, and which few Governments can afford to ignore. In 1916 these commissions were given further powers, whereby some of their members became practically inspectors of, or delegates to, the Army. Such a system is in direct accord with the practice which prevailed during the Revolution and later. It is not for a foreigner to comment upon how far this is congruous, further than to say that its advantages would be manifest, even overwhelming, if the military and civil powers were thus led to agree. Unfortunately, that is rarely the case. The more usual result is distrust on the part of the soldier, and recrimination on the part of the politician.

All Parliamentary privileges had, at the outset of the War,

been so overridden by Joffre that later there was almost a revolt in order to recover them. At the moment, therefore, the Government found it all the more necessary to consider political prejudices when choosing a new Commander-in-Chief.

Several names were bruited abroad during the months preceding Joffre's resignation.

De Castelnau, having been Major-General since December, 1915, might be said to be in the line of succession. It was true that he had not been the active coadjutor of Joffre, as was intended when he was appointed. But that was entirely due to the narrow jealousy of the Commander-in-Chief, who either kept him idle at Chantilly, or sent him on missions of inspection to Salonica or Verdun: although his second visit to Verdun, when he went to save the situation, was of a more important nature. De Castelnau's military reputation was of the highest. He was remembered as the defender of Nancy, and as the victor of Grand Couronné. He was esteemed in the Army, and his name had become popular in the country. But while he had then never taken part in politics (he is to-day a deputy), he was thought not to be a very fervent Republican. He was known to be a practising Catholic: and, referring to some comments in the press, he one day laughingly introduced himself to Clemenceau as "le Capucin botté": de Castelnau could afford to laugh at any insinuations that his religious belief affected the performance of his military duties. While how little he was a fanatic was shown by the composition of his staff at Chantilly: a chaplain (Father Pierre de Castelnau, his nephew) and three officers, one of whom was a Protestant, while another professed to be an advanced free-thinker. But to the members of the Extreme Left (aside, probably, from Gustav Hervé, who had on a similar occasion chivalrously defended him) de Castelnau's

appointment would have been distasteful. If they could not have Sarrail in supreme command, at least they did not want to have "le Capucin botté."

Sarrail was at all times a possibility. He was then in command of the Army of the Orient; but his political friends were perpetually urging that his proper place was at the head of all the Armies of the Republic. Sarrail was a general of considerable ability, and an energetic but turbulent personality. He prided himself above all on being a true Republican. Painlevé said that he was the only really Republican general. More intrigues were set in motion for him than for anyone else, and in the end they harmed him.

His conduct at the Battle of the Marne, where, in order to defend Verdun, he almost exceeded the latitude of discretion given him, entitles him to great credit, and it is too little known. In Macedonia he was, upon the whole, not so successful in his military operations. But he was the last man who should have been sent to command an Army made up of the forces of various Allies. He managed to fight with all of them long before he fought with the enemy. His way of showing his contempt for religion, which, as a free-thinker, he seemed to imagine it was incumbent upon him to do, was distasteful to English officers; who, whether or not they had any deep religious feeling, were imbued with the instinct of respecting the religion of others. Nor were they impressed by the constant flaunting of their Republicanism by a General and Staff whose primary duty was to win battles. With the Staffs of the Italian and Russian commands Sarrail was equally unpopular.

Moreover, Sarrail appeared to busy himself with political intrigues more than anything else. It is true that he had no

confidence in Constantin or in his word, and was inclined to treat that personage in the way he richly deserved. But our political manœuvres were out of place in a General commanding an Allied Army, and excited all the more apprehension because of Sarrail's well-known violent character.

He was perpetually demanding that more troops should be sent to him, while he seemed to be doing little with the considerable number which were already under his command. Thus he gave rise to the complaints which soon began to rain thick and fast upon Paris from the different Allied Governments. They were complaints which could not be ignored, for England and Italy flatly refused to reinforce the Salonica Expedition until they had been completely reassured about the actual condition of the Army of the Orient, and had had some report upon the doings of Sarrail. It was in these circumstances that Briand agreed with the British and Italian Governments to send Roques, then Minister of War, to Salonica, to inquire into the whole situation. Roques's report was favourable. While its effect was strengthened when a few days later (November 19th, 1916) Sarrail took Monastir. England and Italy were, or professed to be, content; merely stipulating that henceforth Sarrail should confine himself to his military duties and leave political matters to those who were charged to conduct them.

Unfortunately the fault-finding did not cease for long. The idea was now widespread that Sarrail, using his Army for that purpose, wanted to overthrow the monarchy and set up a republic in Greece. It is probable that he never had any such well-defined intention, but both his general bearing and his manifold indiscretions were such that there was little cause to wonder if many believed this rumour.

In December, 1916, Lord Bertie, who, in the name of the British Government, had already remonstrated about Sarrail, again impressed upon Briand that he must be kept apart from all political action: adding that, although Sarrail was a French General, he commanded an Allied Army.

This time Briand determined to let Sarrail speak for himself. The English, French, and Italian Prime Ministers were to meet in Rome in January. Briand summoned Sarrail to come and explain his conduct, while on his part he agreed that his Government would abide by the decision of Lloyd George and Sonnino.

Sarrail won the day. His appearance and his wonderful lucidity of expression had their effect upon Lloyd George, who pronounced himself satisfied. It is curious that the two French Generals who most impressed Lloyd George before they had actually succeeded (for the Prime Minister is as susceptible as anyone else to acquired success) were Sarrail and Nivelle: both for the same reason, their demeanour and the clearness with which they put their case and answered questions.

Some months later the same allegations were again being made against Sarrail, and the satisfaction of Lloyd George had disappeared. But Painlevé was then in power (first as Minister of War in the Ribot Cabinet, and then as Prime Minister), and to Painlevé Sarrail was sacred: the only Republican General. The situation had then become critical in Macedonia, not only on account of the complaints of the Allies, but because of mutinies which had broken out amongst the French troops. Foch wished to send a Questionnaire to Sarrail, in an endeavour to find out the exact position. But such was Painlevé's regard for the latter that he refused to allow even that to be done, despite Foch's

urgent insistence.

Painlevé resigned on November 13th and on November 16th was succeeded by Clemenceau. The day after the Inter-Allied War Council meeting on December 4th (when the complaints about Sarrail had been reiterated) Clemenceau began to examine the documents relating to the Army of the Orient. On December 7th Sarrail was ordered to return to France. To the questions which were put to him in Parliament Clemenceau answered bluntly that discipline had disappeared to such an extent that the Army was almost in a state of dissolution; while, if unity of command could not be rendered acceptable to the Allies in the Orient, there would be little chance of ever getting them to agree to it on the Western Front.

Sarrail possesses military talent (although it was not shown to the best advantage in Macedonia), which is reinforced by a vigorous personality. There was every reason to believe that he would be one of the great chiefs at the end of the war. But his inability to keep clear of politics, and the intrigues of his friends for him and against his supposed rivals, practically ruined his career.

He did, however, have one more chance. The incident is curious and typical. In the dark days of March, 1918, Clemenceau considered the possibility of appointing a Governor of Paris who, by his energy, might perhaps inspire confidence, as Galliéni had done in 1914. It was suggested to him that the only available general with the requisite character was Sarrail. Clemenceau hesitated. But he finally directed that the offer should be made to Sarrail, who was sent for and told of the proposal.

“I would only accept upon one condition,” he at once

answered.

"What is it?"

"That Caillaux should be set at liberty."

He was reminded that he was being asked to perform a military duty, and that he could hardly make a political act—if not an interference with the course of justice—a condition of doing so. But Sarrail held firm, and when he returned the next day to give his positive reply he said that he had nothing to add to his former statement. When that was reported to Clemenceau he asked how long Sarrail had to serve before he went on the retired list in the ordinary course.

On April 14th, 1918, Sarrail was placed on the Cadre de Reserve. He was at that date only 62 years of age.[47]

But at the time of Joffre's retirement Sarrail was not an absolute impossibility as his successor. Nevertheless, his name got more advertisement than real consideration. His quarrel with Joffre, and the way in which his friends had subsequently forced the Government to give him another command, had deepened the impression regarding his difficult character. Except amongst the Extreme Left there was general relief when he was at a distance from Paris.

Foch was naturally considered as a likely successor to Joffre, but, for reasons which are obscure, there were at this time persistent rumours that his health was undermined, and that he was too fatigued to be entrusted with a high command. The one thing which seems clear is that there was no foundation for these reports. They were, however, spread with such persistency that they undoubtedly injured his chances. His opponents of the Extreme Left were thus relieved from the

necessity of combating his appointment. For, to some of these Extremists, Foch was objectionable because he, like de Castelnau, was a practising Catholic.

During the few days in December when Joffre was Conseiller Technique he removed Foch from his command of the group of the Armées du Nord. However, that did not affect the question, as the matter had already been decided. For Joffre took this step on the very same day, December 13th, 1916, that the name of his own successor as Commander-in-Chief was announced. In reality, Foch's health was so little impaired that, after reorganising the defence of the Swiss frontier in January, 1917, and, later, going on a mission to Italy, he was, in May, 1917, appointed by Painlevé Chief of the General Staff, which post he held until he took command of the Allied Armies.

The appointment of Pétain was also contemplated as a possibility. In August, 1914, Pétain was a colonel who was approaching the age when, holding that rank, he would be placed on the retired list. He had been a distinguished professor at the War School, and was known as a soldier who was devoted to his profession and seemed to have few interests outside of it.

His advancement had been slow in time of peace, but it was strikingly rapid once the country entered on war. In October, 1914, he was given command of an Army Corps. His brilliant action at Vimy in June, 1915 (during what the French call the second Battle of Artois), again attracted the favourable notice of Joffre, who, later in the same month, gave him the command of the Second Army in succession to de Castelnau, who was then promoted to command a group of Armies. He had participated in the offensive of the autumn of 1915 (the Battle of

Champagne), but during the winter his Army seems to have been dispersed: and he was alone with his staff at Noailles when de Castelnau summoned him to Verdun in all haste in February, 1916. At Verdun Pétain added to his reputation. On his military record there were just grounds for considering his claims, together with those of Foch and de Castelnau, in selecting a new Commander-in-Chief.

Sarrail (whose suspicions about other generals seemed to occupy a good deal of his thoughts) apparently had some doubts about the quality of Pétain's Republicanism. He is said once to have warned Clemenceau against him:

"He is not one of us."

"Much I care about that, provided he can win a battle," Clemenceau had replied.

As a matter of fact, Pétain was not credited with holding religious opinions so pronounced or extreme as to hurt the tender susceptibilities of the Extreme Left. But he had another marked characteristic, very different, but in their eyes equally objectionable. He did not care for politicians, and still less did he care to have them paying visits to his Army. When they did come he was polite, and no more than polite. He left them in little doubt that in his opinion they were a nuisance. Equally independent and reserved, he was incapable of concealing his feelings or making any pretence. He made few friends, but he had a habit of saying things which were likely to make enemies. To Poincaré he once remarked: "Personne n'est mieux placée que vous, M. le Président, de savoir que la France est ni gouvernée ni commandée."

Poincaré, not unnaturally annoyed, replied:

“Vous plaisantez, mon Général.”

“Pas du tout,” responded Pétain.

It is evident that a man who was so blunt and mordant in expressing his opinions would not be much liked by politicians. Nevertheless, it seemed probable that, in default of anyone else, he would have to be chosen: when suddenly a new name began to be mentioned.

In August, 1914, Nivelle had, like Pétain, been a colonel, but a colonel of Artillery. At the Battle of the Marne, where he commanded the artillery of the Sixth Corps, he had distinguished himself by destroying six German batteries. Promoted General of Division (the highest rank in the French Army, the title of Marshal of France indicating a dignity and not a military grade), he later succeeded Pétain, first in command of the XXXII. Corps, and later in that of the Second Army. It was in the latter post that his name suddenly became known to the public. The Germans had taken the fortress of Douamont, and the Emperor had announced this capture to all the world in one of his customary pompous allocutions. But on November 15th it was recaptured by General Mangin, who commanded under Nivelle. The exploit was brilliant, and its fame was increased by the way in which Wilhelm had boasted when his Brandenburgers had walked into the fortress.

All this attracted attention to the commander of the Second Army. The senators and deputies who began to visit him found a soldier with whom they could talk. He was neither silent, like Joffre, nor biting, like Pétain. While they were chiefly impressed, as everyone always was, by the clearness with which he explained everything—a quality which always endears a soldier to civilians. As he was a Protestant, the Extreme Left

had no objections against him on the score of religion; while he had always kept clear of politics. Parliamentary opinion (upon which M. Briand was getting more dependent in proportion as his Government grew weaker) gradually centred upon him; and finally, on December 12th or 13th, 1916, Nivelle (whose mother was English, and whose grandfather had been a British colonel) was appointed to succeed Joffre. Some two weeks later Lyautey's prompt action, as Minister of War, removed Joffre (as has already been related) from an ill-defined position, where he might have had some control over operations. Nivelle was then in supreme command; not, indeed, with the same powers as Joffre had once exercised, but responsible to no one except the Minister of War.

As Chef de Cabinet Nivelle brought with him to Chantilly (which the G.Q.G. soon afterwards left for Beauvais) an officer whose name to this day remains little known to the public, but who, behind the scenes, played a principal part in the events which rapidly followed—Lieut.-Colonel d'Alenson. Noticeable on account of his extraordinary height, dark to the verge of blackness, thin as a skeleton—such was his appearance. In manner, taciturn and absent-minded. In conduct, self-willed to the limit of obstinacy: and enthusiastic for his own beliefs to the point of being a fanatic. It was d'Alenson, and probably d'Alenson alone, who was responsible for the absolute faith which Nivelle always expressed in the result of his operations, and in the extent of their success: although none of his generals seem to have shared his views on the latter point. D'Alenson was a dying man, as his appearance indicated. He was convinced that, following certain lines, Nivelle would win the war in time for him to see the victory. Instead, he saw Nivelle's failure, and only survived a few months thereafter.

At Verdun everything had succeeded with Nivelle; it was therefore not remarkable that he counted upon those who had aided him there to second him in the greater task he was now undertaking: especially upon Mangin (one of the greatest of French fighting generals, and who, years before, had, with Marchand, faced Kitchener at Fashoda), to whom he gave the command of the Sixth Army, which numbered 350,000 men.

But although Nivelle was in supreme command, he inherited a plan of offensive which, in its main outlines, had been drafted by a meeting of Allied Generals held at Chantilly, November 15th and 16th, 1916. Acting upon this, Joffre, shortly before he retired, had prepared a plan whereby the French were to attack between the Somme and Lassigny, and the British between Bapaume and Vimy. Nivelle, however, changed the plan by extending the proposed front from Soissons to Rheims: and it was on this extension, by an attack on the "plateau" of Craonne, that he thought he would be able in some hours to force the German position.

In order to carry out the whole plan Nivelle attempted to persuade Haig to take over the Front as far as Roye. The latter made various objections; and finally Nivelle went to London to try to wring from the Cabinet a decision which he had been unable to get from Haig.

In this he was fully successful. Lloyd George, as well as the other members of the War Cabinet, were all impressed by his appearance, his confidence, and, above all by his clarity of expression; while the fact that he spoke English probably counted not a little (even if unconsciously) with politicians who were by this time getting somewhat tired of being dependent upon interpreters. They cited Nivelle as the first French general

they had met who would tell them freely what he meant to do, and who could also tell them in a way they understood. A month later (on February 15th, 1917) Lloyd George, coming into a room where Berthier de Sauvigny (one of the French military attachés) was having a conversation with Colonel Hankey, told (I translate Berthier de Sauvigny's own account of this conversation as given in an official publication) "how profound had been the impression produced on the War Committee by General Nivelle. Doubtless, the prestige which Marshal Haig enjoyed in the Army and amongst the English nation would not allow them to subordinate him purely and simply to the French Commander; but if the War Committee recognised that this measure was indispensable, it would not hesitate to give Marshal Haig secret injunctions in that sense."

On February 26th or 27th an Allied Conference took place at Calais. Lloyd George, Haig, Robertson, Briand, Lyautey, and Nivelle were amongst those present. The result of this meeting was a signed agreement whereby in effect the British Government recognised that the direction of the coming campaign should be in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief of the French Army: and agreed that, with certain limitations, Haig should, but for those operations only, be under the orders of Nivelle.

This arrangement was made more difficult by the fact that Haig was now a Field-Marshal (which in the British Army is a rank and not simply a dignity), while Nivelle was only a General of Division, which corresponds to a British Lieutenant-General. But, nevertheless, once it was signed. Nivelle did not wait an instant to take full advantage of it. For on February 27th he sent (it is thought at the instance of d'Alenson) a letter of instructions couched in terms such as would only be used by a

superior officer to his subordinate. Apart from the tone of the communication, Haig probably was by no means in accord with some of the things he was directed to do; for instance, that he should increase the importance of the British Mission at French G.Q.G.; and that, upon his return from Russia (where he was then on a mission with de Castelnau, Lord Revelstoke, and others), he should place Sir Henry Wilson at the head of that Mission.

Haig did not take the trouble to discuss the contents of this letter. He simply sent it to the Chief of the Imperial Staff, Sir William Robertson, together with a letter of his own (of which he sent a copy to Nivelle) in which he re-opened the whole question of his having been put under the orders of the French Commander-in-Chief.

Haig might possibly have won his point (for although Lloyd George was entirely against him, he did not care to take the risk of exasperating him to breaking point) had not Briand intervened. The French Prime Minister (who never found Haig very congenial) sent the British Government a message of the most vigorous nature, insisting that Haig should be made to respect the Calais agreement; and saying that "the repeated tendencies of Marshal Haig to evade the instructions which are given him . . . render the co-operation of the British illusory and the exercise of a unique command impossible."

Briand's blunt statements led to another meeting in London, on March 13th, between the British War Cabinet, Ribot, Haig, and Nivelle. In the result Haig signed a letter stating that he accepted the Calais agreement, but specifying that, except for the period of the proposed operation, the British Army and its Commander-in-Chief were to be considered by Nivelle as allies

and not as subordinates. The terms of the letter show that Haig was acting more upon compulsion than in accordance with his own wishes.

Briand's telegram, however, was, in one respect, unintentionally unfair—when he suggested that Haig was in the habit of evading what he had undertaken to do. To say that there were never any differences of opinion between Haig and the French High Command or the French Government would be absurd. There were many. French statesmen thought Haig unduly obstinate, sometimes because he insisted upon following his own views instead of adopting theirs. One often heard Haig criticised. While I see in my diary for 1918 the record of a conversation with a French Cabinet Minister (needless to say, not the Minister of War), in which were some forcible comments upon the British Commander-in-Chief. But even those who were not amongst Haig's admirers never then impugned his loyalty. Undoubtedly he did not care to be under the orders of Nivelle any more than he is supposed to have wanted unity of command until March, 1918. But it may be taken for granted that if he objected to Nivelle's letter it was because he thought it was not in accord with the Calais agreement.

This service, however, was the last which Briand was destined to render Nivelle. On March 15th Lyautey made a speech in the Chambre des Députés which led to the downfall of the Government. He first provoked the anger of a number of deputies by intimating that he did not wish to imperil the national safety by disclosing certain things: and in the tumult which followed this statement he made other remarks which still further infuriated the Extreme Left. Unable to continue his speech he left the Chamber accompanied by M. Briand. The latter wished to arrange matters by some explanation. But to that

Lyautey absolutely refused to be a party, and gave Briand his resignation. Two days later Briand himself resigned.

The political world was not surprised when Poincaré asked Ribot to form a Ministry. Ribot, in his day one of the greatest of French parliamentary orators, is of the same generation as Clemenceau. His career had been distinguished; and there was no section of the Chamber which did not hold him in respect. He was known to have little love for soldiers. Indeed, it was rather cruelly said of him that he had even more contempt for them than he had for the rest of mankind.

The new Minister of War was Paul Painlevé—whose tenure of office is even to-day more a subject of discussion than that of any other French minister throughout the war.

Painlevé,[48] who is a member of the Académie des Sciences, is the greatest mathematician in France, his only rival having been the late Henri Poincaré. But nobody has the appearance of the usual scientist less than Painlevé. Simple in his manners, unaffected in his conversation, impulsive, alert, ardently attached to whatever he believes, there is, withal, something almost naïve in his composition. He is not only "très honnête homme," but he gives in a marked degree the impression of being one. His first connection with political life was through the Dreyfus case. The prosecution, hearing of some conversation he was supposed to have had with a cousin of Dreyfus, put in the dossier an account of it which was untrue. Painlevé gave evidence at Rennes, when there was a dramatic confrontation with the author of the fabrication. It was through this incident that he came to know Clemenceau. For many years they were political friends. But when Painlevé was Prime Minister, Clemenceau assailed him so fiercely that to-day they

no longer speak to each other. The war had already shown the difference between their views. Painlevé was, for instance, firmly attached to Sarrail, whom he regarded as a Republican general. Clemenceau was indifferent on this point. It was, I think, Painlevé himself who once said reproachfully of Clemenceau that he did not care whether he won the war with the aid of God or of the devil: which was quite true.

But Painlevé is of another school. He would probably rank Jules Ferry as high as Gambetta among the statesmen of the Third Republic. He has a fear rather than any hatred of the Church; a fear lest it may encroach. Yet he has none of the bitterness which in France so often characterizes opponents of Roman Catholicism.

Painlevé had been Minister of Public Instruction and of Inventions in the Briand Cabinet of October, 1915. But when Briand reconstituted his Ministry in December, 1916, he had refused to remain. For this there were several reasons. Painlevé did not approve of the arrangement about Joffre because he thought that it still left the latter in a position where he might interfere. But he has himself written that the certainty that Briand would not name Pétain (and presumably that he would name Nivelle) as Joffre's successor was also one of his reasons for refusing to continue in office.

This fact was well known; and is largely responsible for the controversy which is still waged regarding Painlevé's conduct in respect to the Nivelle offensive. Briefly, the friends of Nivelle allege that Painlevé, by his interviews with various generals, inspired a lack of confidence in Nivelle; that he arrested the offensive; that his statements as to the losses incurred were incorrect; and finally, that if Nivelle had been

allowed to continue he would have had still further and greater success. His more enthusiastic supporters go so far as to aver that the war would have been won in 1917 instead of 1918.

It is undeniable that there are many and obvious objections to a Minister of War on the eve of a great offensive asking the lieutenants of the Commander-in-Chief for criticisms of the latter's plan. But in this instance it is to be remembered that it was not Painlevé but Lyautey—Lyautey, a soldier and not a civilian—who had begun to ask the generals commanding under Nivelle for their views. Pétain, when questioned, had made no secret of the fact that he could not foresee the great success which Nivelle anticipated with such confidence. Lyautey was so impressed by this statement that he communicated it to the War Committee, which summoned Pétain, who simply repeated what he had said to Lyautey. Nor was Pétain the only one who did not have the same faith as Nivelle. Mazel, who commanded the Fifth Army, had also told Lyautey (it is not clear whether he did so at his own instance or in answer to questions put to him by the Minister) that he did not think he would be able to carry out successfully the part of the proposed operation which was assigned to him.

The accusation that Painlevé divided the High Command falls to the ground. Pétain's criticism of the plan of offensive was the one which merited and received the most consideration: and that criticism had been made before Painlevé was in office. When Painlevé saw Lyautey upon taking his succession, the latter told him what had occurred, and, according to Painlevé's account, did not hide that he himself was uneasy.

Moreover, two events took place immediately before Painlevé became Minister of War which he may reasonably

have thought would possibly affect the plans of the High Command.

The Russian Revolution had led to the collapse of the Russian Army, and it was probable that Germany might be able to send reinforcements to the West from that Front. Moreover, it had been an essential part of the original plan that Russia should attack at the same time as Great Britain and France.[49]

The other event was the unhampered retirement of the Germans. On March 16th they had in fact made their great retreat, leaving Roye, Lassigny and Bapaume. They had taken with them all their heavy artillery and other material, and had been allowed to do this at their leisure without being hurried by any attack. In return they gave the Allies a certain stretch of devastated territory, and rendered void in advance a great part of the proposed offensive.

Three days after Painlevé came to the rue St. Dominique—on March 22nd—he had a long conversation with Nivelle. According to his own account he told Nivelle openly (what Nivelle of course already knew) that his personal preference had been for Pétain as the successor to Joffre: but that that belonged to the past, and that as Minister of War he would give Nivelle all possible support.

Anyone who knows Painlevé will readily believe that he was absolutely frank in his interview with Nivelle.

The Minister then asked the Commander-in-Chief whether (in view of the two occurrences to which I have alluded) it might not be necessary to modify his plans.

Nivelle replied that he had never seriously counted upon the offensive being assisted by the Russians attacking on their Front.

While he was not alarmed by the possibility of more German troops being freed in Russia for the West. According to Painlevé, he remarked: “Plus il sera nombreux, plus la victoire sera éclatante.”

Nor did Nivelle show that he attached any greater importance to the German withdrawal: though the fact was that he had, as a result, decided, on March 15th, to extend his Front for the attack beyond Rheims as far as Aubérive.

The truth is that Nivelle had been warned of this impending retirement, and had not heeded the warning. In his report on July 17th, 1917, to the Army Commission of the Sénat, Senator Henry Bérenger says: “The Commander-in-Chief was in London —March 13th and 14th—when the first serious indications of the retreat opposite Roye-Lassigny were signalled by General Franchet d’Esperey. Upon his return to Beauvais, at four o’clock on the morning of March 16th, General Nivelle sent for General Franchet d’Esperey, whom he saw at 1 p.m., when he directed him to take the offensive the same evening in order to regain on all points close contact with the enemy.”

But Nivelle had been first warned of this retreat not, as this report would indicate, on March 13th or 14th, but ten days earlier.

On March 4th, and after he had given a prior verbal opinion to the same effect, Franchet d’Esperey had written Nivelle, saying: “The ensemble of information which has been obtained for some time past shows that the enemy has prepared a retreat towards a new position situated at twenty kilometres from the present Front. Upon the existence of this plan of retreat there seems to be no room for any doubt: the concordant information given by prisoners, by the enemy’s systematic course of

destruction in the zone which is to be abandoned, by the retirement which has already been effected of a certain number of organisations, (staffs, aviation parks, etc.) reveal clearly the intentions of our adversary."

Franchet d'Esperey, in the same letter of March 4th, advised Nivelle that this retirement would be on a longer line than he had at first thought; suggested that it would therefore be necessary to modify the plan of the coming offensive; pointed out that the sooner an attack was made the more chance there would be of surprising the enemy in his preparations, and especially of capturing his artillery; and finally added that his own armies (Groupe des Armées du Nord) would be able to make the necessary attack upon six days' notice.

Nivelle did not reply until March 7th, when he wrote that he saw no reason to modify the existing plan; and that he thought it was very unlikely that the enemy would voluntarily abandon the Roye-Soissons line.

The variation is evident. On March 7th Nivelle did not contend that a German retreat ought not to modify his plan—he took no issue on that point with Franchet d'Esperey: he simply said that he did not believe that there would be such a retreat.

To Painlevé he said that it made no difference. While it has been recorded (although I am in no position to vouch for this) that he told a group of officers that, if he could have given orders to Hindenburg, they would have been to do that very thing.

Even Mangin, who is not unfavourable to Nivelle, but is hostile to Painlevé, says that Franchet d'Esperey notified Nivelle on March 4th, and adds: "Sceptical, General Nivelle at first decided to change nothing in his plan of operations."

It was not the least of Nivelle's mistakes.

At his interview with Painlevé on March 22nd, and at subsequent interviews on March 26th and 31st, Nivelle expressed the most complete confidence in his plan. Its object was to effect a rupture by attaining the third and fourth enemy positions. The plan itself, devoid of all technical details, was that the Sixth Army (Mangin) should attack on the Aisne, and the Fifth Army (Mazel) should take Brimont. These operations executed, the Sixth Army would press towards the right, thus making a space into which would come the Tenth Army (Duchesne), which was to force further the enemy's retreat.

Throughout Nivelle insisted that the rupture would be obtained in twenty-four or, at most, in forty-eight hours. It was later suggested that the exact time had simply been used as a phrase, and that Painlevé had unfairly tried to tie Nivelle down to it. But leaving aside Painlevé's statements about the various occasions upon which Nivelle made success within that period, a vital condition of the rupture, there is the evidence of what he said on that subject before Painlevé was in office.

On March 1st, 1917 (Painlevé became Minister on March 19th), Albert Favre and Maurice Violette, who were members of the Army Commission of the Chamber of Deputies, made a report to the Chamber upon the interviews they had had with Nivelle and some of his generals at the Front. Their report shows Nivelle as saying: "If within the twenty-four hours of the attack we are not able to take all the enemy's guns, including those of large calibre, it will have to be gone over again, and there will be nothing left to do except to stop the battle." The reporters add: "No doubt there may be a little exaggeration in this delay of twenty-four hours; the circumstances may impose

the necessity of stopping before the third position, as we observed to General Nivelle. A reasonable delay of forty-eight hours, or, at most, of three days, may therefore be admitted. If the battle is not won within that time one may be sure it never will be. Everyone is in agreement on that point."

Nivelle was equally confident that his troops would reach the third and fourth enemy positions. Micheler was less certain. On March 24th he wrote to Nivelle expressing his doubts. Not receiving any answer, he took it upon himself to issue on March 26th, an instruction in which, foreseeing resistance on the two last German positions, he recommended certain measures of prudence. But this was so little in accord with Nivelle's plans or beliefs that on April 1st he ordered Micheler to change his instruction, pointing out that the success of the manœuvres to obtain a rupture depended upon the surprise caused to the enemy by the sudden bursting of the troops upon the third and fourth positions.

In brief, everything shows that whatever may have been Painlevé's errors of judgment, he never had any cause (as he probably never had the desire) to press Nivelle to bind himself to something definite. No commander was ever more ready than was Nivelle to say exactly what he was certain he would accomplish, and to fix the period within which he would do it.

In the meantime Painlevé was pursuing his conversations. His own impression was so firm (and Painlevé is a man whose impressions are easily discernible), his lack of faith in Nivelle was so well known, that it is possible that this may have had its effect upon some of those whom he questioned; though it may be taken for granted that it did not in any way change Pétain's replies.

On March 28th Painlevé had a conversation with Micheler, whom he had desired to come to see him at the rue St. Dominique. According to his own account, Painlevé took this step at the repeated insistence of the late M. Antoine Dubost (then President of the Senate), who had twice urged him to see Micheler, on the ground that that general could give him information of great importance. It is therefore open to question whether or not Micheler took the first step—whether he requested Dubost to get Painlevé to send for him.

Micheler told Painlevé that the situation was entirely different from what it had been in December, when he had agreed to carry out the plan: and he gave the technical reasons for his view. In his opinion a rupture was out of the question. If everything went well the troops might possibly be able to reach Laon. But it would be very difficult and costly. In reply to direct questions put to him by Painlevé, Micheler said that he thought it would be dangerous not to make an attack, as that would offer the enemy an opportunity to take the initiative.

On April 1st Painlevé saw Pétain, whom he had not met since the preceding November. Pétain gave a definite opinion that the offensive would be stopped at the second enemy position; and that it was illusory to imagine that it would get further. Even for that it would be essential to have good weather conditions, and to concentrate the artillery bombardment on the first and second positions. It would be an expensive operation, but it would be worth while. He agreed with Micheler that it would be perilous to abandon the attack altogether. Nevertheless, if nothing went wrong on the Trentino, he would not be afraid to put it off until there was better weather and the days were longer.

On April 2nd Painlevé saw Franchet d'Esperey in Paris. This general also had his doubts. He was preoccupied by the question of the Hindenburg Line—what was its actual strength. The G.Q.G. thought that it was without any depth, and would crack like a bit of paper. Franchet d'Esperey doubted the exactitude of this information.

Painlevé had already, on March 24th, had a conversation with Haig. He found that the general desire of British Headquarters was to make an attack as quickly as possible.

As a result of these various interviews Painlevé called Nivelle to a conference which was held at the Ministry of War on April 3rd; the others present being the Président du Conseil, Ribot, Painlevé himself, Admiral Lacaze, Albert Thomas, and the Minister of the Colonies, Maginot.

At this meeting Painlevé told Nivelle of the objections raised by his subordinates. Nivelle's confidence remained unshaken. He assured the Ministers that the two first positions would be taken without great loss—and that the others would also be captured. He reiterated that the rupture was certain.

It is probable that Painlevé would have been well advised, both for the sake of the country as well as for his own record, if he had left the matter at that: unless, indeed, he was prepared to take the responsibility of overriding the Commander-in-Chief—which would, of course, have entailed the latter's resignation.

He had carefully (perhaps too carefully) collected the opinions of Nivelle's generals. He had, in the presence of his own colleagues, placed these views before Nivelle. The latter had held firm. Therefore, unless Painlevé cared to act himself, there was nothing more which could usefully be done.

Unfortunately, on April 5th, Colonel (now General) Messimy, a deputy, who had been Minister of War in August, 1914, gave Ribot a memorandum which, he said, faithfully reflected the opinion of Micheler. This note was entirely against the offensive, claiming that while it would entail heavy losses it would give little real result; and that in any event the time of year was unpropitious for such an operation.

The Prime Minister thought it proper to call a Council of War. This was the famous Compiègne Council held on April 6th, 1917. Poincaré himself was present, the others there being Nivelle, Pétain, de Castelnau, Micheler, Franchet d'Esperey, Ribot, Painlevé, Lacaze, and Albert Thomas. It will be noticed that this was a meeting of an entirely different character from the one held three days before when Painlevé had submitted to Nivelle the opinions of his generals. This was a Council of War, at which the President of the Republic presided: and at which Nivelle and his generals were brought face to face.

Painlevé exposed the fears of the Government. Nivelle repeated his former assertions—a certain rupture within twenty-four hours. De Castelnau, who had just returned from Russia, admitted that he had had no opportunity to study the situation and therefore could pronounce no opinion. Franchet d'Esperey reiterated his doubts.

Micheler's statement apparently led to some dispute between himself and Nivelle. But in any event Micheler did not go so far as had Messimy's memorandum: he afterwards told Ribot that the latter had exaggerated his views.

Pétain, who probably was somewhat bored by so much talking, said briefly that it was an illusion to think that they could get beyond the second enemy position: even that would be

possible only if the attack was well prepared and the weather conditions were favourable.

At one stage Nivelle offered to resign. The accounts of this incident vary. Probably Nivelle did not mean it seriously; certainly the Government did not take it seriously.

The meeting ended without changing anything, except possibly further weakening the confidence of some of Nivelle's generals.

From that time the Government took no step regarding the coming offensive.

The incident sheds an instructive light upon the relation of a Government and a Commander-in-Chief in time of war. Undoubtedly any Government (and perhaps particularly that of the French Republic) should in advance know and approve of an operation so important as the one in question. But a change of Government after a plan has been approved (even admitting that external events might be taken to have altered the position), but before its execution, creates a delicate situation. Is the whole matter to be reopened? Or is it a legacy which the Government inherits? No one is obliged to take office if it entails an unacceptable legacy. In this instance, although there was no British intervention in the matter, yet both Haig (whatever his primary view) and the British Government would undoubtedly have considered it a breach of faith had the offensive, agreed to in December, 1916, been abandoned by the Ribot Ministry in March, 1917.

It may well be contended that Painlevé would have been more logical if he had not accepted the War Ministry. One of the reasons why he refused to remain in the reconstituted Briand Government in December was (as already stated, and as

Painlevé has admitted) that he did not approve of the appointment of Nivelle; he thought that the latter's ability had not been sufficiently tried—and that Pétain was the man for the post. But if in December he refused to join a Cabinet because, in fact, he had not sufficient faith in Nivelle, surely he put himself—and others—in an awkward position when he took office as Minister of War at a time when that general was about to launch an offensive—at a time when he himself thought it could not be arrested: for he subsequently stated in the Chambre des Députés that it would have been nearly as impossible for him to have done it as to have stopped a train going at full speed.

It is incorrect, as has already been pointed out, to accuse Painlevé of having begun the conversations with Nivelle's generals. Pétain and Mazel had already expressed their doubts to Lyautey. But Lyautey told this to Painlevé when the latter took office; and Painlevé would probably have been wise to have gone no further: for although the duties of a Minister of War are the same whether he be a soldier or a civilian, it is obvious that in carrying out these duties a soldier, in dealing with other soldiers, may, without detriment, do things which a civilian cannot. In any event Painlevé does not seem to have obtained much more information than what Lyautey had already given him.

But, if any serious objection can, upon the whole, be taken to Painlevé's conduct, it is that he himself did not seem to be ready to assume any responsibility.

Did he intend to stop the offensive no matter what Nivelle thought or what the generals said? Evidently not, or he would not have consulted one or the other.

Did he mean to stop the offensive if Nivelle's generals

thought it should be stopped? Impossible to say: for all of them, except perhaps Micheler in the Messimy note, thought that the attack should be made.

Pétain, upon whom Painlevé placed most reliance, stated clearly that the attack, though costly, would be worth while, provided there was proper preparation, and that the weather conditions were favourable: but that he did not share Nivelle's sanguine expectations as to the extent of the result. What, therefore, was there for Painlevé to do except to convey those opinions to Nivelle—who, no doubt, was already fully aware of them: unless he meant to stop the offensive or to relieve Nivelle of his command?

But anyway, this information was given to Nivelle formally at the meeting of April 3rd. What justification is there for the War Council of April 6th, for which Ribot no doubt is partly responsible? The only possible answer is the Messimy memorandum. But in the first place it surely would have been a measure of ordinary prudence, before summoning such a Council, presided over by the President of the Republic, to have sent for Micheler and to have confirmed this secondary evidence: all the more so as Micheler had already discussed the whole subject at length with Painlevé on March 28th, and had distinctly said that he thought it would be dangerous to abandon the offensive. In the result it appeared that the Messimy memorandum did not faithfully represent Micheler's views. But if it had, what did Painlevé propose to do? Was he then going to stop the offensive? If not, what was the object of the meeting? One can answer, to discuss the whole matter again. But that is exactly what was wrong.

The weak point in this part of Painlevé's case is that there

was an offensive in which he did not believe: and yet either he could not (as he alleges) stop it, or he would not take the responsibility of doing so. Nevertheless, if Nivelle had renounced his plan, would not Pétain have agreed and done the best he could to arrange with Haig and Lloyd George? But Nivelle would not give it up; and Painlevé wanted the result without taking the risk.

It may be going too far to say that he diminished confidence in Nivelle (one may be sure that Pétain, for instance, was not in any way affected), but he certainly did nothing to increase it: and that is perhaps one of the duties of a Minister of War.

It is easy to criticize vaguely, and more difficult to say exactly what should have been done, even after the event. I have already suggested that Painlevé should never have taken office (though I am well aware that at that time Parliament and the country both wanted to see him at the War Office) when an offensive was about to begin under a general in whose capacities he had little belief.

Once in office, holding the views he did, his best course was probably to delay the offensive until there was a certainty of better weather. The fact that Pétain considered that course feasible should have given Painlevé confidence; and it also provided him with someone to fall back upon in the event of Nivelle's actually resigning.

But although Painlevé may be open to some criticism upon the ground indicated, there is not, as I propose to show, any justification for the assertion that he stopped the offensive. Nivelle took the time he said he wanted, and stopped it himself when he realised that it was impossible to achieve a rupture. Still less, in my opinion, is there any justification for the

widespread story that through Nivelle's not having been allowed to have his own way the war might have been won in 1917. I am inclined to regard that as one of the greatest fables of the period. It is true that Mangin says that, under certain circumstances, that result might have been attained. I gather (the passage is not very clear), that he means if Nivelle's method had been continued. It requires some temerity for a civilian to differ from that distinguished general; and I should not venture to do so were it not that there is equally eminent military opinion on the other side.

It remains to record one curious and amusing result of this conflict between civilian and soldier. Mr. Lloyd George was so taken back by all the discussion it had aroused, and by the bungle which seemed to have resulted, that at a meeting on May 4th in Paris, he practically lectured the members of the French Government upon the necessity of soldiers keeping their plans to themselves, and not running the risk involved in disclosing them to politicians. That surely must have caused Haig, who was present, to ask himself grimly, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

The English offensive had begun on April 9th. The French attack upon which Nivelle had based such high hopes commenced (after having first been fixed for April 14th) at six o'clock on the morning of April 16th. The weather was cloudy, and partly on that account there had not been the proper artillery preparation. In brief, neither of the conditions precedent which had been stated by Pétain to be essential to even the qualified success which he considered possible were fulfilled. But what had perhaps not been foreseen by anyone (and certainly not by Nivelle), and what above all else stopped the advance, were the enemy's machine guns used in a quantity which caused

amazement, and taking full advantage of the nature of the ground which the French had to cross.

Nivelle's own account of this first day says that at noon it was evident that there was a "lutte acharnée" at the first enemy position: and he admits that it was only partially on the Fifth Army front that the second position was reached. He adds: "We are meeting everywhere with an obstinate resistance. The enemy, in order to replace his fixed machine guns which have generally been destroyed, is taking into action numerous light machine guns which the German Army have only used recently, and which the infantry are bringing out of the shelters."

In brief, Nivelle's report of what did happen differs materially from what he was confident would happen.

Mangin himself admits that it was difficult for his army to advance. After going forward from 500 to 2,000 metres his troops were stopped. They began again, only to be checked. Mangin remarks that the battle had not taken the turn which was anticipated.

On the morning of April 17th Nivelle stopped the advance of the Sixth Army (Mangin's). He had realized that there was now no question of breaking the enemy's lines.

The result of these two days, as summed up by the report of Senator Bérenger (who is considered as being friendly to Nivelle), is as follows: "It appears from this perusal" (*i.e.*, of all the orders given during this period), "with a monotony which is truly tragic, that the abrupt halt (arrêt) of the regiments which attacked was everywhere due to the enemy's use of machine guns."

M. Abel Ferry's report said: "We did not, alas, get to Laon,

as the High Command had cherished the illusion that we should. We did not capture the first position at all points, we rarely took the second, and nowhere did we take the third. . . . It must be admitted that the *élan* of the infantry was as in the first days of the war: and also that the destruction wrought was equally as incomplete as during those early days. Our men were no longer thrown upon intact barbed wire, but they were thrown against intact machine guns."

The plan of operations was changed on April 22nd. But I propose to refer only to two incidents which illustrate the continuous conflict between Painlevé and Nivelle.

Nivelle projected an attack upon Briamont. Painlevé, through a conversation with Mazel, obtained an idea (and possibly an incorrect one) of the probable losses. According to Nivelle's friends, Painlevé stopped the operation. The only proof in support of that statement (but one to which some weight must be given) is a letter from Nivelle to Painlevé, dated April 30th, which reads as follows:

"You informed me yesterday, April 29th, at 7 o'clock, by telephone, that the Cabinet, at a meeting held the same afternoon, had decided to suspend the operation of the Fifth Army. Not having received, according to regulations, a written confirmation of this decision, which is important, both in principal and as a fact, I have the honour to ask you to be good enough to give the liaison officer who takes this letter such confirmation by letter."

On the other hand, Painlevé denies absolutely that he ever gave such an order. He states specifically that in the telephone conversation which he had with Nivelle on the evening of April 29th, the only reference to the Briamont attack was that he

impressed upon Nivelle that he must first be in accord with Pétain, who had that day been appointed Chief of the General Staff with extended powers; and who, so for as Painlevé knew, thought that Briamont would only be captured to be lost immediately. It is regrettable that Painlevé has not published the reply which he sent to this letter of Nivelle's. It is inconceivable that he should have been so imprudent as to leave such a communication (which he admits was delivered to him) without an answer. If there is no reply in existence he must fully realise this fact to-day; for he complains that it is Nivelle's letter which has allowed the circulation of a report that the Government had telephoned prohibiting the proposed operation.

Some days earlier, on April 22nd, M. Ybarnegary, a deputy who was serving at the Front, was received at the Elysée, on his own demand, by the President of the Republic, to whom he declared that he spoke on behalf of his chief, General Hirschauer, and likewise interpreted the sentiments of the officers and men of his corps; that they were about to be ordered again to begin the Craonne attack which had been so fruitless and costly on April 16th; and that they were all firmly of the opinion that, on account of insufficient artillery preparation, as well as for other reasons, the only result would be a great loss of life to no good purpose.

M. Poincaré was alarmed by a statement made with such precision and upon such authority. It happened that Painlevé was that day absent from Paris. Poincaré therefore took it upon himself to have a telephone message sent to Nivelle, to the effect that he had been warned by those who would be charged with the execution of the proposed operation that they considered it premature and doomed to failure.

Painlevé subsequently confirmed the action which the President of the Republic had thus taken.

Nivelle, naturally irritated by this communication, replied that as a matter of fact no date had yet been fixed for the attack. He asked to be told which of his subordinates had acted in this way behind his back; and, at the same time, instituted on his own account an inquiry which proved futile.

Whether or not Hirschauer or Ybarnegary had any good ground for believing that the attempt was on the point of being made again has been disputed. But in any event these two incidents prove clearly that Nivelle's usefulness was hampered by interference, and that his authority had been diminished. The Government had shown before the offensive that he did not possess its full confidence. In the offensive he had not achieved that success which he had almost guaranteed in advance. After the offensive the Government let it be seen still more openly that it placed no reliance upon him. In these circumstances it was as proper as it was inevitable that Nivelle should make way for someone else. On April 29th Pétain was appointed Chief of the General Staff. Under the arrangement thus made Nivelle was unable to take any initiative except in accord with Pétain, who had had no enthusiasm whatever for the plan of the offensive. For two weeks Nivelle remained in nominal command but without any actual authority. Finally, on May 15th, he was relieved. Pétain was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Armies of the North-East, and Foch Chief of the General Staff.

In the disappointment which was universally felt throughout France at the result of Nivelle's offensive, a great part of the hostile criticism was directed against Mangin. Many stories were current about the manner in which he was said to have

uselessly sacrificed his troops. The fact was (as Painlevé admitted) that the losses of the Sixth Army (Mangin) were proportionately less than those of the Fifth Army (Mazel). Nevertheless, a popular outcry seemed to indicate Mangin as a victim.

One of the allegations made by Nivelle's friends against Painlevé is that he was responsible for Mangin's removal from the command of his army. All the evidence is against this contention. It appears that Nivelle himself broached the subject to Painlevé on April 25th; and on the same day asked the Minister of the Colonies (M. Maginot) to appoint Mangin Governor of West Africa. This request he repeated to Ribot at a meeting held at the Foreign Office on April 28th. On both occasions he was told that it was out of the question that the somewhat turbulent Mangin should be sent to West Africa, where there had already been some trouble; and that in any event Mangin would never accept. When this demand was rejected a second time Nivelle proposed that Mangin should be replaced, saying that, while he had not committed any error, yet, rightly or wrongly, he had lost the confidence of his subordinates. The Government consented to take the action which the Commander-in-Chief stated was necessary. It was agreed that Nivelle should himself inform Mangin of the decision the next morning, April 29th; and that the arrangement thus made should be formally ratified by the War Committee on the same day.

Painlevé did his part. The War Committee of the Cabinet approved of the decision which had been taken. Early in the evening of April 29th Painlevé telephoned this to Nivelle; the latter replied that he had informed Mangin that he was removed *for the reasons already stated*; and also that Mangin was then

on his way to Paris to place himself at the disposition of the Minister of War.

Later in the evening Mangin appeared at the rue St. Dominique; but he then told Painlevé a different tale, namely that Nivelle now admitted he could reproach him with nothing, and no longer insisted that he should be relieved of his command.

Painlevé replied that it was then too late. But the surprise which this incident caused him was increased when, on May 2nd, he received from Nivelle the usual letter confirming his request that Mangin should be removed, but giving another pretext. Instead of repeating that Mangin had lost the confidence of his subordinates (the ground upon which the Cabinet actually had acted). Nivelle wrote asking that he should be given leave in order that he might rest, and added: "In the course of the recent offensive General Mangin, yielding to the ardour of a military temperament, did not bring to his calculations for the preparation of the attack the method and the precision which are necessary in commanding an army. I express the opinion that General Mangin, by his great qualities as a leader, by his character, and by the prestige which arises from his splendid military career, deserves to receive, when his holiday is finished, a new command at the Front."

Painlevé drew Nivelle's attention to the very vital difference between the reasons for which he had asked the Government to remove Mangin and those given in his formal letter making that request. Presumably there was no reply. But the reason of the sudden change is not far to seek. Mangin's ability to express his views with vigour and emphasis is well known. He told Nivelle forcibly what he thought of the way in

which it was proposed to treat him. In the face of this determined man Nivelle ceded, and allowed him to go to Painlevé saying that there was now no reason why he should be displaced. While when Nivelle finally was obliged to sign a letter asking for his removal he thought it better, on account of his interview with Mangin, to alter his reasons.

No doubt Painlevé himself thought that Mangin should lose his command. But clearly Nivelle took the initiative, possibly thinking that that sacrifice would calm the storm which had arisen on account of the comparative failure of the offensive.

It remains to consider whether the offensive could be called a success, even if it did not realise all Nivelle's sanguine anticipations.

Nivelle himself told Painlevé on April 19th, and repeated it to Poincaré at the Elysée on April 28th, that the battle was won. He admitted that it was less brilliant in its result than he had anticipated, and that the enemy lines had not been broken; but said that his initiative had been paralysed. Mangin also held the view that the operations were a success; and contends to-day that they should not have been abandoned. That was not the general impression in the army. Pétain, for instance, did not agree with this conclusion.

Amongst politicians M. Doumer's judgment may be taken as sound and without prejudice, while his position as Chairman of the Senate Army Commission gave him every opportunity of getting from day to day the information necessary to form a fair opinion. He stated that, making all allowances, it could not be denied that there had been a check. That view coincided with popular opinion.

It has been asserted by Nivelle and Mangin that the

Government magnified the losses, and that there were only from 15,000 to 16,000 killed in the period between April 16th and 26th, and not 25,000.

Nivelle, in a note dated May 13th, which was subsequently used by Bérenger in his report, places the number of killed at 15,589. But the value of this summary disappears when it states that the figure only includes those whose death has been certified by two witnesses.[50] Moreover, if the number of prisoners was deducted from Nivelle's number of missing, the number of killed would be very much higher on his own showing. Mangin himself puts the number who disappeared at 20,500, and there were only 4,000 prisoners.

G.Q.G. at first gave the figures for the period between April 16th to 24th as 25,000 killed; 96,000 wounded; and 4,000 prisoners. And the Government, so far from increasing these calculations, reduced them somewhat in its statement to the Army, putting the killed at 20,000. But G.Q.G. subsequently changed its figures several times, and on one occasion put the wounded as low as 58,000: explaining the difference from the original 96,000 on the ground of double counting.

Painlevé puts the total at 117,000, made up as follows: 28,000 to 29,000 killed; 85,000 wounded, of whom 5,000 died in the hospitals at the Front; and 4,000 prisoners.

Of all the conflicting statistics those of M. Abel Ferry seems to be entitled to the most consideration. He accepted as a basis a total of 102,000—17,000 killed; 65,000 wounded; and 20,000 disappeared. While as there were only 4,000 prisoners, this would increase the number of killed to about 28,000, after making a fair allowance for deserters and those who strayed away, and also taking into consideration the deduction of ten per

cent., which Ferry said should be made on all his figures. On the other hand, 5,000 of the wounded who died in the ambulances at the Front between April 16th and 25th may properly be added to the number of those killed, thus making a total of 33,000. This supports Painlevé's estimate.

The large number of missing and the small proportionate number of prisoners is attributed to the fact that the Germans killed many wounded who were lying on the battlefield. In the result, the proportion of killed to wounded was high.

The certain gains to be put against these losses are 20,000 prisoners taken (the English took another 20,000), and a not very great advance. It was impossible to calculate the number of Germans killed. Ferry seemed to think that they may have about equalled those of the French. I understand, however, that the German official figures, which have not yet been published, will show that between April 1st and 30th the Seventh Army, the First Army, and the Right Flank Division of the Third Army, lost 50,866 in killed and wounded, and 22,219 in missing; making a total of 73,485. As these statistics do not correspond exactly, either in the period they cover or otherwise to the French ones cited, it is impossible to deduce from them any absolute comparison. But it would seem clear that the German losses were certainly less than those sustained by the armies under Nivelle's command.

But the effect of a great but not decisive battle upon the morale of the troops engaged is also a factor to be taken into account when deciding whether it was a success.

That Nivelle himself may have suffered a bitter disappointment in not seeing his hopes realized was one thing. But it was another and graver thing that the hopes he had incited

in the armies should have come to nothing. Before the offensive he expressly encouraged the idea that it was the last great effort. Officers had been instructed to arouse the enthusiasm of their men; and for that purpose part of the plan of operation was communicated to them. The various measures taken in this direction were eminently successful. Before the offensive there was a general spirit of optimism. M. Abel Ferry recounted how the poilu was convinced that it was "le dernier coup."

To raise to this point the expectations of men of whom many had been fighting for twenty months on their own soil was a dangerous move. The certainty of reaction in the event of failure to realize these great hopes must have been evident. Nivelle himself must have been well aware of the risk he was taking; and all the more so because on February 28th he had written to the Minister of War exposing at length the "défaitiste" propaganda which was then being carried on in the army.

When these hundreds of thousands of men saw all these promises of a speedy end of the war vanish, when they saw that it all remained to be done, and that there were yet many weary months of fighting ahead of them, there ensued a demoralisation such as the French Army has probably never seen. Battalions, regiments, even a whole division, mutinied, and, refusing to obey their officers, attempted to march on Paris.

It was Pétain's first work to restore discipline and to revive the morale of the armies—and probably only Pétain's patient work could have done it.[51] But the result was that for many months he was obliged to be on the defensive. Haig had thought the offensive should continue; and on May 4th Lloyd George had solemnly engaged the French Government to go on. But the Government promised what it could not do. Some important

positions at Verdun were retaken between August and December; and on October 23rd the Battle of Malmaison was won. But for the greater part of this time, while Haig was continuing his vigorous operations, the French Armies were recuperating from the after effects of the Nivelle offensive.[52]

CHAPTER V.

Unique Command

Long before 1918 it was apparent that the vital defect in the instructions which Kitchener had given to Field-Marshal French in August, 1914, was the strict injunction to remember that his army was independent, and that he was never to be under the orders of any other Allied general.

The subordination of Haig to Nivelle had ended when the latter was relieved of his command in May. The British Government saw no reason to place their armies under the orders of his successor, Pétain: and all the less so because the morale of the French troops was seriously affected, and Pétain was employed more in restoring that than in undertaking any serious operations. There was also another reason to which at the time the French did not give due weight. The British Ministers had not been greatly edified by the conflict between Painlevé and Nivelle. While not pronouncing upon the merits of that dispute (nor were they unanimous in their views), the members of the War Cabinet could not understand how it was possible to expect success with such friction and interference. Lloyd George, who had never been much on the side of the soldier, was impressed by this example of what happened when politicians wanted to be generals, or, at least, wanted to control generals too strictly. So much so, that, as already related, he took it upon himself to read the French Government a lesson (which was very badly taken in some quarters) on the need of

letting those in command keep their own counsel.

It was obvious that, fighting in France, it was only a French general who could be Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces. Lloyd George, at one period, said that public opinion in England would never allow the British Army to be under the orders of an Allied general, except possibly for the execution of a particular movement. But as time showed the weakness of a dispersed command the Prime Minister realised that public opinion would be obliged to bow to necessity.

At the end of October, 1917, Painlevé, Franklin-Bouillon, and Loucheur came to London. Whatever the exact object of the visit, the conversation I had with the two former gave me the impression that they were not sorry to be away for a few days from questions in the Chambre des Députés. It was, in fact, then evident to all that the Painlevé Government was tottering.

Nevertheless, it was during this visit that Lloyd George gave Painlevé a letter which was the basis of a great change. This communication, which was dated October 30th, was in itself remarkable. At the outset it stated that the brutal fact which had to be recognised was that, after three years of war, and after the greatest efforts on the part of the Allies, Germany remained the victor. After an examination of the circumstances it concluded that the fundamental weakness of the Allies lay entirely in the lack of real unity in the conduct of military operations. It therefore proposed the creation of a Committee, “A kind of Inter-Allied General Staff,” which would prepare plans of warfare and keep constant watch upon what was taking place. It was practically what had been suggested by a French Deputy, M. Jean Hennessy, in December, 1916. This plan was formally adopted on November 9th, 1917, at Rapallo, the Caporetto

having made it necessary that the meeting of the Allies should be held in Italy.

It was arranged that the Supreme War Council should meet every month at Versailles. The only permanent members were the Prime Ministers. But there was also a staff of military advisers attached to the Council in order to co-ordinate the efforts of the Allies; and they made their headquarters at Versailles. The military representatives first appointed were Foch, Sir Henry Wilson, and Cadorna, General Bliss being added later to represent the United States. But Lloyd George was insistent that no Chief-of-Staff of any of the Allied armies should be eligible, his primary object being to exclude Robertson. Therefore, on December 4th, 1917, it was decided that Foch should remain Chief of the Staff, and General Weygand was appointed in his place as the French Military Representative. In effect this made no difference. For, unlike Robertson and Henry Wilson, Foch and Weygand were as one; the latter, in fact, having been Foch's Chief-of-Staff up to this time.

While the formation of the Supreme War Council was undoubtedly a move in the right direction, yet the whole scheme was not without a certain ambiguity. Lloyd George's letter had pointed out that of course the Council could not substitute itself for the various Governments, that it could only advise. In brief, it had no real executive power. It is probable that the Prime Minister always meant this as a first step towards unity of command, and that he considered that public opinion in England might be prepared in this manner. But it is regrettable that Painlevé did not take advantage of the opening thus given to press for an immediate change. Lloyd George could not himself make such a proposal, but he might have yielded to it. Painlevé

must have realised a few days later the strength of the feeling which existed on this subject.

On November 13th Millerand, who had not spoken in the Chambre des Députés since 1915, made it a direct question upon which he challenged the Government. The former Minister of War insisted that it was not sufficient to promise unity of action. The enemy had actual unity of command. Everyone knew the name of their Commander-in-Chief, and the only way that the Allies could have equally effective unity was by choosing without delay one supreme commander.

The Government was sustained on this question, but a few hours later it was defeated upon another vote. Painlevé resigned, and was succeeded by Clemenceau.

In certain quarters in England the institution of the Versailles Council was not regarded with any favour. The fact that the British representative was Sir Henry Wilson did not lessen this resentment. Wilson, who, in the South African War, had been a *protégé* of Lord Roberts, was afterwards the head of the Staff College. He had always urged that preparations should be made for sending an expeditionary force to the Continent in the event of war. But he thought that the plan, as finally drafted, was defective, both in respect to the number of troops and otherwise. A legend (for which it is impossible to vouch) has it that, when lecturing one day at the Staff College, he pointed to a town on the map and said: “There, or just about there, gentlemen, is where the British Expeditionary Force will run a great risk of being defeated or surrounded.” The place indicated was Mons. When the war broke out he was Director of Military Operations. In the ordinary course he would presumably have become Chief of the Imperial Staff when that post was given to Sir William

Robertson. But he forfeited this, ostensibly on account of the part he had taken in the Curragh trouble.

No doubt Wilson's attitude at the War Office during that crisis had something to do with Asquith's decision; but certainly the Prime Minister was not sorry to find a reason that allowed him to pass over Henry Wilson. He had not forgotten how, some time before the war, Wilson, despite his objections, had insisted upon reading at a meeting of, I think, the Committee of Imperial Defence a memorandum setting forth the unprepared condition of the country and of the army in the event of any conflict.

In the last days of July, or the early days of August, 1914, Lord Haldane, during his fugitive re-passage at the War Office, sent Wilson to the French Ambassador, M. Paul Cambon, to make a proposal that Great Britain should give only certain limited and indirect support to France. The exact facts regarding this incident are still obscure, but it has already been stated in print that it occurred, and Lord Haldane did not take that opportunity to make any denial. While, in an account published some time ago in the *National Review*, Mr. Leo Maxse related how he was in constant communication with Wilson during those days; that at one stage the latter told him that the outlook had darkened regarding the participation of England side by side with France; and that this, through Mr. George Lloyd, M.P. (now Sir George Lloyd and Lieutenant-Governor of Bombay), led to the leaders of the Opposition, Lord Lansdowne and Mr. Bonar Law, writing a letter promising support, which forced the hand of the Government. But what Mr. Maxse does not tell (and possibly did not know) is that Wilson was entirely pessimistic that day, precisely on account of the mission with which he had been charged by Lord Haldane.

In any event, the offer was considered unsatisfactory, and was rejected by M. Cambon. It is safe to assume that Wilson must greatly have disliked being the bearer of such a communication, for he had long been a firm friend of France and of the French. Convinced that there would be war with Germany, he had been in the habit of spending some weeks in France every year, generally using a bicycle, exploring the country and learning the roads which it might be useful to know in the event of an invasion—knowledge which was of practical service during the retreat in August, 1914. Moreover, Wilson was, before the war, on friendly terms with many French officers, and notably with Foch.

He was with Sir John French during the retreat after Mons, and it was his tact which prevented a disagreement between Galliéni and French just before the Battle of the Marne. The former seems to have suspected, without being sure, that it was Wilson who had thus eased a strained situation. The French always remembered this incident, and (as has been mentioned), when Nivelle sent his famous letter to Haig, on March 4th, 1917, after the Calais Conference had given him supreme command, one of the points on which he insisted was that Wilson should be attached to French Headquarters as soon as he returned from Russia.

Haig and Robertson were both strongly opposed to the establishment of the Supreme War Council, told their objections to Lloyd George, and repeated them to everyone else. It is probable that Lord Derby, who was then Secretary of State for War, and Robertson's firm supporter, did not, at first, look upon it with any great favour. Wilson had great difficulty in getting the staff he required for his work at Versailles. I recollect his saying one day, before he returned there soon after his appointment, that

if "Eddie Derby"—as he called Lord Derby—did not soon give him what he wanted, he would resign. Then, cheering up, he added that, anyway "X" (naming a certain general) would always do his best for him at the War Office while he himself was absent.

I did not add fuel to the flame by telling Wilson that, the evening before, I had happened to meet "X" at dinner and that, in discussing the situation afterwards, he had said to me that Wilson was not the man who should have been sent to Versailles, and that the appointment was a bad one. I have always found that, although soldiers complain about politicians intriguing, they can do their fair share in that way.

Nevertheless, the Versailles Council did finally get under way, but at no time did it possess the sympathy of either the Commander-in-Chief or the then Chief of the Imperial Staff. Haig disliked it instinctively. Robertson felt that it might be the first step towards unity of command, which he had always pronounced to be "radical, untimely, and dangerous." In fact, Robertson's one plan seems to have been that of wearing down the Germans: killing on both sides, finally leaving the Allies with something over. It was exactly the "guerre d'usine" which had been the fixed idea of Joffre, and which led to his downfall when it was realised that that meant the maximum sacrifice of human life and the minimum exercise of human intelligence.

The immediate result of the friction caused by the creation of the Supreme War Council was a constant stream of rumours of resignations and dismissals. On Saturday, December 29th, 1917, a well-known Frenchman came to see me in Paris, and told me that Lloyd George had unofficially informed those in high authority in France that he intended to replace Haig by

Robertson, and Robertson by Wilson. I got permission to communicate this to Wilson, who was then at Versailles; but, despite its source, it seemed to me a wild rumour, or, at best, a statement which had become twisted in the telling. For, although it was quite possible that Robertson might some day be replaced by Wilson, it seemed highly improbable that Robertson would ever succeed Haig. It was, therefore, with some interest that I subsequently read in Colonel Repington's "Diaries" that on January 10th, 1918, he was told in Paris by an unnamed Frenchman that it was being said again that Haig would be replaced by Robertson and the latter by Wilson.

In the meantime Foch and Wilson had proposed the formation of an Executive War Committee. Its primary object was to form a reserve by withdrawing from each Allied army such number of divisions as the representatives of the Allies on this military committee might decide. Obviously, such a body infringed upon the full powers of the Commander-in-Chief. But its necessity was equally obvious, for the basis of the Foch plan of campaign for 1918 was a Reserve Army which could strike when and where occasion might demand. Such a force could never be formed by commanders in the field. Nor was it meant that it should be under their orders until, possibly, after it was thrown into action.

Robertson seemed to think that the appointment of this Committee might diminish what he considered the evils of the Supreme War Council. The belief that he might be named to represent Great Britain may have had its effect upon his judgment. It has been said that Henry Wilson suggested that Robertson should be the British Member of the Board. I am unaware whether this is a fact. But when the composition of the Committee was settled at a meeting of the Supreme War Council

towards the end of January, 1918, someone mentioned Robertson, and Lloyd George then renewed his objection to any country being represented on such committees by its Chief-of-Staff, and proceeded to name Wilson.[53]

That was the beginning of the end. Early in February came the long-expected break between the Prime Minister and Robertson. The immediate cause was an acrimonious dispute between the Chief of the Imperial Staff and the War Cabinet about the Versailles Council.

There was never any question about the services which Sir William Robertson rendered to his country, or about his absolute devotion to duty. But he was sincerely imbued with the idea that the function of the Government was to raise men, more men, and still more men, and to allow him to have these men killed off without any comment or control. He apparently believed that all the political people were incompetent, when they were not something worse. The war was finally won by the very principles which Robertson had rejected as dangerous, which he did his utmost to obstruct, and for the tardy adoption of which he is to some extent responsible.

The publication of Colonel Repington's "Diaries" showed Robertson's belief in himself, distrust of others, narrowness of vision, and absolute lack of any plan except that of the "guerre d'usure."

As between Lloyd George and Robertson, it was a clash of two natures which were absolutely incompatible. Probably neither gave the other credit for all the qualities he possessed. In any event, Lloyd George disliked Robertson, and Robertson had no confidence in Lloyd George. It was inevitable that they could not continue to work together, and equally inevitable that

Robertson should be the one to go. It was, however, unfortunate for Robertson that his too ardent friends would insist upon contending that no one else could do his work, and that, if he went, it was a political job. The truth is that, for reasons which might, perhaps, be described as temperamental, Robertson never fully appreciated our French Allies, and, possibly, was never fully appreciated by them. He was, no doubt, a very good watch-dog to see that the French did not get the better of us in any way. But that attitude was not one which contributed towards the Allies getting the utmost possible out of their mutual co-operation.

An incident which occurred at this time showed how widespread was the sentiment which had been manufactured about Robertson, as may be seen from the following extract from a diary I kept at the time:

> "Henry Wilson's appointment to succeed Robertson was known on Saturday, February 16th, and was in the Sunday papers. I spent an hour with Wilson Sunday morning at Eaton Place, and he reminded me of what I told him in Paris. I asked Wilson about the general situation, and he said that there were various places where the Germans could break through 'as if it were paper.' He felt quite certain that the big German offensive would be on the Western Front.
>
> "I was struck by the way in which he spoke about Haig. I reminded him of when, through Haig, he had had no billet the summer before; how, upon his return from Ireland he had spent an afternoon with me in my empty house (everyone being in the

country), and had expressed the fear that he might not be employed again during the war, and of what had led to his being given Eastern Command soon afterwards.

"Wilson took absolutely the proper tone about Haig, and showed none of that bitter hostility which the friends of Haig and Robertson always show about Wilson. He said he had no illusion about Haig being a military genius; that if there was to be a great offensive on our part, Haig would certainly not be the man for the place: but that what we had first to look forward to was to being on the defensive; and that no one could do that better than Haig; that he would be very sorry to see him go; and that he meant to support him by every means in his power. He added that when we came to having an offensive there would probably be a Generalissimo, and he hoped it would be Foch.

"We discussed Lord Derby's position, and I expressed the view that, within the last ten days or so, Lloyd George had detached him from Robertson, and that Lord Derby would not resign. Wilson said it was impossible. He had committed himself too far.

"When I returned home the latter part of the afternoon I found that Lord Beresford[54] had twice telephoned to me. I therefore telephoned to Great Cumberland Place, and he told me that there had been a meeting there that afternoon, Lord Salisbury and a number of others; that they were all indignant

about Robertson's dismissal, and that they meant to bring the matter up in the Lords. Lord Beresford also assured me that it was a fact that Lord Derby was going to stay at the War Office, and gave me the authority for the statement. I telephoned this to Henry Wilson, whose surprised ejaculation was forcible.

"I went to see Lord Beresford early on Monday morning, and pointed out the embarrassment that might be caused by a debate of the kind which he and his friends contemplated. He admitted that, but said they thought it was their duty; that Lloyd George was getting rid of Robertson because the latter would not stand any of Lloyd George's trickery, and that anyway Robertson was a great soldier.

"I took that opening: I said that nobody could possibly be more ignorant of military matters than I was; and that for anything I knew to the contrary Robertson might be ten times a greater soldier than Wilson. But that what I did know was that Robertson did not get on with the French; that, despite any strength of character he might have, it was a fact that he was a Waterloo Englishman—one who thought that any Englishman was worth three Frenchmen, and one who was quite unable to prevent the French from seeing that he thought so. I said that it did not require any knowledge of military matters to know that it was of the highest importance that if we were going to have Allies, we should work hand in hand with them—that I did

know something about the situation in France: and I also supported my statement by showing Lord Beresford two or three letters.

"I also referred to the fact that Henry Wilson was *persona gratissima* with the French, and especially with Foch.

"To my great satisfaction, Lord Beresford came round to the view that working together was more important than anything else. He promised to see that nothing was done (at his request I sent him a memorandum), and that ended the matter.

"During his conversation it appeared that (although they were both Irishmen) Lord Beresford and Henry Wilson had never met. When I was lunching with the Beresfords a couple of days later they asked me to ask Henry Wilson if he would come to dine, and to fix a date with him, and that Lady Beresford would then write to him. This I did. Wilson was much interested by what had happened, and chose Thursday, March 21st. He called for me that evening, and told me he had just left the King, who was very much agitated, as the expected Offensive had begun.

"When we got to Great Cumberland Place there was a message that the Prime Minister wanted to speak by telephone with Sir Henry Wilson. In Great Cumberland Place the telephone is somewhere in the subterranean regions, and Wilson therefore had to be conducted to the cellar. The same thing happened while we were at soup, and

> twice again during the dinner. I heard afterwards that Lloyd George had quite lost his head. There were sixteen at dinner: the Beresfords, Henry Wilson, Lord and Lady Salisbury, Lord Hardinge, Lady Lytton, Sir Edward and Lady Carson, Sir Frank Swettenham, Sir John Cowans, and Theresa, Lady Londonderry. I can't remember who were the others.
>
> "Towards the end of dinner we got the intercepted German wireless, according to which we had lost more than 15,000 prisoners. They put it to Wilson, who said it was about what he had expected the first day.
>
> "It was an interesting dinner, partly because some of those present thus met Wilson for the first time on what must have been one of the most critical days of his career. His calmness, his confidence in the ultimate result, while at the same time not making any predictions other than to say that we might yet have worse days before we saw better, made the effect which they deserved to make."

The great effect of Wilson's appointment was that there was now a Chief of the Imperial Staff who was strongly in favour of unity of command; whereas his predecessor, Robertson, had always been bitterly opposed to that idea.

The attacks upon Henry Wilson continued for some time. They were inspired by indiscreet and irresponsible friends of Robertson's, and were supported mainly by Colonel Repington, who, to a belief in Robertson, added an avowed enmity to

Wilson. The origins of that personal feeling are well known. If Repington sincerely thought that the appointment of Wilson was wrong and that Robertson's services as Chief of the Imperial Staff were essential to winning the war, he would have been well-advised had he even gone out of his way to show that his own dislike of Wilson counted for nothing when considering matters of national importance. Unfortunately, he was at no pains to hide his manifest prejudice. His articles at first caused some amazement in France. But once the nature of his relations with Wilson was understood (I was obliged to refer to them myself in the course of an interview, and I believe that others did likewise), the value of his comments upon this particular subject was discounted by the French Press.

The result proved Repington to be entirely wrong. He was adverse to unity of command, and he wrote that the war would never be won unless Robertson was brought back. In the end the unique command opened the way to a victory which rested upon principles entirely opposed to those advocated by Robertson. Moreover, at a time when in France he was making some parade of his friendship for our Ally, Repington wrote (as is stated in his own Diary) a memorandum for the Dominion Prime Ministers, in which he accused the French of wanting to force unity of command simply in order that they might be able to make use of British troops for their own purposes. Such a proceeding is hardly creditable, either to Repington's sagacity or to his good faith.

Henry Wilson always took these attacks in good part, although, I think, he had some contempt for Repington's folly in letting the world see how he was influenced by personal animosity.

He realised long before he succeeded Robertson (and had often stated) that his opinion about the way the war should be conducted differed radically from that held by the latter. But he regarded that simply as a divergence of professional opinion. Nevertheless, as the attacks proceeded, he thought that Robertson's friends were doing him an ill-service. He wrote me about this matter as follows:

"26, Eaton Place, S.W.1.
"24, iv, 18.

Dear X.,

"Many thanks for your cutting, which is, I think, true. Someone ought to defend Robertson against the disgraceful attacks in the *M.P.* and *Globe*. In effect, these consist of saying that Robertson categorically warned Govt. that they were steering straight for disaster; that the Govt. flouted his advice, and then that Robertson continued to draw his full pay and live rent free in York House, *knowing* we were doomed.

"I can't believe it, and someone ought to save him from such disgraceful attacks.

"Yours,
"H. W."

At the outset of the 1918 campaign the Allied troops actually at the Front were somewhat inferior in numbers to the enemy, although, probably, better supplied with materials of war. The Allied forces in France (which phrase does not include the

American troops) reached their height in the spring and summer of 1917; but thereafter it was necessary to allow large numbers of men to return to carry on the life of the country: to work on the land as well as in the factories.

The question of effectives was, therefore, a source of constant preoccupation, and also a cause of continuous irritation between London and Paris. Nothing excited Clemenceau so much. Whenever his mood was not of the best, he seemed to turn to this subject. He had more than one clash with Lloyd George, and the latter finally told him that he was at liberty to send to England and have a report made upon what had been done with the men raised, and whether it was possible to get any more from the country. For Clemenceau was in the habit of protesting that, if the figures supplied by the British Government were correct, he could not imagine what had become of all the men who had been called to the colours.

It happened that there was a French expert on Man Power, Colonel Roure, who had had great success in his own country. Clemenceau took advantage of Lloyd George's offer and sent Roure to England; but his mode of conducting his investigation (and probably other things) simply led to further friction.

However, the predominant importance of the Man-Power question was clearly realised by the Versailles War Committee. This body, of which Foch had been made Chairman, immediately began to try to organise the reserves necessary for the 1918 campaign. The plan had the evident complication that Foch was to get armies which were presumably to be under his command, by detaching troops from the armies of Pétain and Haig, as well as some to be sent by Italy. Nevertheless, in pursuance of this scheme, the French Third Army was

withdrawn from the Front, where it was replaced by Gough's unfortunate Fifth Army. The French First Army and some other divisions were also added to these reserves for the Army of Manœuvres, as it was called.

Foch was anxious to constitute this Army as speedily as possible. He thought that the Germans would attack either near Cambrai or near Reims, and the plan was to keep his forces near Paris, ready to strike whichever way the attack was made.

But a difficulty arose about the contribution which was to be made by Haig. It was on February 6th, 1918, that the Inter-Allied War Committee wrote to the Commanders-in-Chief stating the number of troops each was expected to send for the Reserve Army. The French and Italian replies were received within two weeks. But it was only on March 2nd that Haig wrote refusing to contribute any divisions to the General Reserve except the British Divisions then in Italy, and which, in any event, were not under his command.

The result of this was that the Italians withdrew their promise to send troops, and the contemplated "Army of Manœuvres" practically ceased to exist except on paper. That was, in fact, the last of Haig's various refusals to abide by the promises and arrangements made by his Government. It was also the most costly.

It is difficult to imagine any legitimate reason for Haig having thus withheld his reply until the very eve of hostilities. Moreover, he had been present at Versailles when the Supreme War Council adopted the plan of campaign for 1918. He must, therefore, have known that a Reserve Army, to strike as Foch might direct, was the very essence of that plan.

The Assistant Secretary of the Supreme War Council,

Captain P. E. Wright, has written: “It may quite well be that he did not understand what was being done. My own impression of him during the discussion was that he entirely failed to follow what was being discussed.” The tone of Captain Wright’s comments upon Haig seem to show a certain prejudice. “A man both obtuse and extraordinarily slow. . . . On a very low plane of human intelligence.”

Yet it must be admitted that French military leaders and statesmen who throughout the war (and since) showed in private conversation their admiration of the diverse qualities of various English generals—Wilson or Allenby, Plumer, Home, or Byng—were never able to perceive in Haig the slightest power of conception or the faintest tinge of imagination: nothing beneath his charming manner but an obstinacy which was shown chiefly by his tenacity in insisting upon his own prerogatives. Even to his troops he was little known. No stories or anecdotes are evoked by his name. Unlike any other commander, he went through the war leaving no record of any mark made in council, or of any great deed achieved on the field for which he was primarily responsible.

It has also been stated by Captain Wright that Haig refused to detach any troops for the Reserve Army because he and Pétain had met towards the end of February, and, unknown to Foch, had made a plan which was inconsistent with the one already adopted. It is true that at one period there were rumours in well-informed circles that Haig and Pétain had arrived at some arrangement which would render abortive the idea of Foch’s striking Army. But rumours were then rife, and, in the absence of some proof, it is preferable to think that it was only a rumour. Confirmation, however, of the feeling which prevailed about Foch’s plan is to be found in an account which Colonel

Repington gives of a conversation he had with Foch at Compiègne on February 6th. Pétain then said that he did not mean to allow Foch to interfere with his reserves, and that he would resign if necessary. He added that he was sure that he and Haig would agree, and that they could "carry on."

If by chance that lying jade, Rumour, was for once right—if Haig and Pétain did concoct a plan—then they at the same time prepared a calamity. When it was apparent to Foch that he was not going to have any Reserve Army it was equally apparent to him that Gough's Army would be destroyed if the enemy attacked at that point, and that anyway there would be disaster somewhere. On March 14th, 1918, there was a meeting in London. Foch has himself recently recounted what happened.

By this time his relations with Clemenceau had changed. Some months earlier there had been general amazement in Paris at the influence which Foch seemed to have acquired over the President du Conseil. That influence probably exaggerated, although undoubtedly they were then on the best of terms. But in March, 1918, and thereafter, Clemenceau, while using Foch, missed few opportunities to be unpleasant to him. As Foch himself says: "Je ne sais pas s'il m'aimait, mais il ne me le témoignait guère." It is difficult to say exactly who or what was responsible for this change (one which was later destined to prove fatal to Clemenceau's candidature for the Presidency), but perhaps Mandel (Clemenceau's Chef du Cabinet, and now a deputy) was not foreign to it.

Foch says: "I had been appointed to command the 'Army of Manœuvre,' which did not exist to any great extent. At this meeting I asked the English to contribute effectives for this Army. Marshal Haig declared in the name of the Government,

which was represented particularly by Mr. Lloyd George, that it was impossible. I began to reply with some vivacity. 'Keep quiet,' M. Clemenceau said to me forcibly; 'I am the person to speak in the name of the French Government, and I accept Marshal Haig's reply.' I said to myself: 'Wait until to-morrow, and I will say something.' The next day, when the Council was on the point of breaking up, I spoke, and this time I was not stopped. I declared that a formidable offensive was being prepared. I added: 'I know what the battles of the Allied armies are like. I have taken part in them on the Marne and in Italy. Here is what is necessary in the way of liaisons. Here is how we should understand each other. Here are the precautions we ought to take, etc., etc. But I warn you that nothing is ready to repel the offensive, and that there may well be a disaster.' It had its effect on them. And some days later, at Compiègne, and then at Doullens, they remembered what I had said."[55]

The result of the German attack was (as Foch had predicted) the complete defeat of Gough's Fifth Army, as there were not sufficient reserves which could be brought up in time. Foch's plan had simply been that, as the Germans might attack either the British or French line, there should be a reserve army within striking distance: for it was obvious that, in an attack, the Germans could throw in forces which would put either the British or French Army alone at a marked numerical disadvantage. Haig had frustrated this plan. He thus found himself (as Foch had foreseen, but as Haig was incapable of realising until it was too late) fighting the major part of the German Army with his own weaker and unsustained force. It required the greatest defeat which the British Army has ever known (for so the Battle of St. Quentin has been justly described) to make him comprehend the situation.

On March 26th the capture of Amiens seemed imminent, and Haig ran every risk of being driven back to the coast. He at last saw his error, and also that he had created a situation which was beyond his power to control. He therefore telephoned that morning to London and asked Lloyd George to come over, stating that in his opinion it was now essential to have unity of command. Lloyd George, being unable to leave London, sent Lord Milner. The meeting took place at Doullens, on March 23rd, 1918. Foch has given the following account of it: "At Doullens there were Lord Milner, Marshal Haig, M. Poincaré, M. Clemenceau, M. Loucheur, and General Pétain.[56] For my own part, I was not content. According to all I had learned, General Pétain was preparing to retire on Paris, and Marshal Haig towards the sea. It was the open door to the Germans. It spelled defeat. 'We might,' said M. Clemenceau, 'give Maréchal Foch the command of the Armies which are operating around Amiens.' It was Marshal Haig who opposed this suggestion, stating that there was only one reasonable solution, and that was to give me command of the Allied Armies on the Western Front. M. Clemenceau agreed, and so it was decided."

This account differs somewhat in its details from other reports of this historic meeting at Doullens. It omits all reference to the part taken by Lord Milner, for it was the latter who, when he saw that matters were proceeding slowly, and that Foch's dissatisfaction was increasing every minute, took M. Clemenceau aside, suggested to him that the supreme command should be given forthwith to Foch, and then spoke about it to Haig, upon whom he had earlier in the day urged the desirability of that course. Foch's own account shows that Haig, then comprehending the danger, was against any half measures, and preferred to see Foch in supreme command. It was none too

soon.

It was thus given to Foch, who at one time during the war had been left practically idle, to finish the struggle.

Galliéni, to whom history will always give the credit for the Battle of Ourcq, was “l’intelligence même.” The same phrase was used by two French statesmen in depicting to me his qualities.

Joffre, although his plans were wrong, his preparations lacking, and his operations faulty, was able to inspire a confidence which was not always justified by the circumstances. But it played its part in warding off danger.

Pétain’s character perhaps entitles him, more than any other French general, to be called a great man. As a soldier he failed in little or nothing he undertook. No one else could have restored the morale of the troops as he did in the weeks following Nivelle’s offensive. But Pétain’s failing (as failing it is from a military point of view) is that he was too careful. He was never quite ready for the big offensive: either there were not enough troops in the line; or artillery was lacking; or reserves were not sufficiently strong. He aimed at a degree of preparation and perfection which it is difficult to achieve in practice. It is unlikely that the war would have been finished in 1918 had he been in supreme command.

Foch is sometimes reproached with thinking that France is made for the Army, instead of the Army for France. The truth within that exaggerated statement is that he is a soldier through and through. He is also the greatest strategist the war produced. It has been said that he had the advantage of taking supreme command after four years of warfare, when he could profit by the lessons and by the mistakes of others. In a measure that may

be correct, but it is more to the point to consider the position which existed when Foch was actually given a free hand. On March 14th he predicted what would happen because he had not been allowed to constitute a proper Reserve Army. His prophecy was fulfilled to the letter. When the meeting took place at Doullens the British Army had sustained the most stupendous defeat in its history. The whole situation was gravely compromised, and the peril of irremediable disaster was more impending than at any time since September, 1914. As Foch himself remarked to Clemenceau in a moment of impatience at Doullens: “You give me a battle which is already lost, and you ask me to re-establish it. I accept, and you think you are making me a present. It needs all my *candeur* to accept under such conditions.”

CHAPTER VI.

The Asquith Debacle

The dramatic fall from power of Mr. Asquith, in December, 1916, vitally affected the whole course of the war.

Asquith had first made his name by a brilliant career at Oxford, where Jowett had predicted his success in the world. Coming to London, he was called to the Bar, eventually achieved a certain practice, and in due course went into Parliament. Although without family influence or private means he was from the outset marked for political office. His name became better known in the country through his success as Sir Charles Russell's junior in the *Times* Parnell proceedings before the Royal Commission, although it should be added that he never obtained any commanding position as a lawyer.

His second marriage both broadened and changed his life and affected his whole career. He was at that time Home Secretary. Soon afterwards his party went into Opposition; and he himself broke an unwritten rule that a former Cabinet Minister should not return to practice at the Bar. He came back to office with Campbell-Bannerman, whom, a few years later, he succeeded.

Possibly the country was fortunate in having Asquith at the head of what was then the extreme party in the State. There was at least the assurance that nothing would be done too hastily. A man of great intellect, but with none of the makings of a great

man; with no high ideals, but with no petty characteristics, he rarely imitated, and habitually he temporized as long as possible before arriving at a decision upon the proposals of others. Although very unfair use was made of his favourite saying, “Wait and see” (a phrase which was equally unfortunate as President Wilson’s quotation, “Too proud to fight”), it is undeniable that it truly expressed his mentality in the latter days of his political power.

All that he asked was to remain at 10, Downing Street and to guide the affairs of the country with as much dignity and as little trouble as might be possible. In the ordinary course he doubtless would have been Prime Minister for a number of years. But sooner or later there probably would have come a conflict with Mr. Lloyd George. The latter was in every respect the antithesis of his chief: a man of no intellectual accomplishments and of little knowledge, who felt at home only in the company of those whose attainments in that respect were at least not superior to his own. Dominated sometimes by high ideals and sometimes actuated by mean motives, he had withal many of the parts of a great man; and still more of the qualities of a great national leader. But it was not so much the difference in character which rendered inevitable the clash as Mr. Lloyd George’s overweening ambition to be in supreme power. Nevertheless, any contest between Asquith and Lloyd George might not have terminated to the advantage of the latter in normal times. The war gave him his opportunity.

Soon after August, 1914, it was apparent that the truth of Macaulay’s dictum that a successful peace Prime Minister might be a failure in time of war was illustrated in the person of Mr. Asquith. He was neither resolute in council nor did he possess any personal power to arouse the country. When he had been on

the verge of defeat he had accepted the proposal to form a coalition, which he had previously spurned. But any live leadership was still lacking. When Parliament prorogued in the summer of 1916 it was after a session in which the vacillations of the Government had first amazed and had finally alarmed and exasperated the nation.

Nevertheless the Cabinet started the Autumn Session with better prospects than it had earned any right to expect. But within a few weeks its inherent weakness again began to be apparent. By the month of November the country was disgusted. While at the same period Mr. Lloyd George was saying openly to his intimate friends that the war would be lost if Asquith continued in office. He sincerely believed (and with reason) that he was the man destined to show the way to victory.

But it was difficult to see how matters could be brought to a crisis except by Mr. Lloyd George himself taking a personal political risk; and that he was always indisposed to do. He wanted a "palace insurrection," a rebellion from within, which would oust Mr. Asquith and carry him to Downing Street. He was, therefore, obviously obliged to depend upon the adhesion of the leaders of the Unionist party. The most essential point was to obtain the support of Mr. Bonar Law. Although perhaps even that might not have sufficed to carry the day had not Mr. Balfour also deserted Mr. Asquith.

In many respects the details of the intrigue are still unknown or obscure. The person who had the greatest part in carrying it to a conclusion was Lord Beaverbrook, who then, as Sir Max Aitken, sat in the House of Commons as member for Ashton-under-Lyne. It is doubtful whether Aitken conceived the original idea. The probability seems to be that it originated with others;

and that it was in casting around for someone to influence Mr. Bonar Law that they disclosed the project to Aitken.

The latter was already credited with being mainly responsible for the choice of Mr. Bonar Law as leader of the Unionist party upon the resignation of Mr. Balfour. At that time the logical selection was either Mr. Walter Long or Mr. Austen Chamberlain. The party was divided in its views: and neither Mr. Long nor Mr. Chamberlain was anxious to force a vote on such a question. Aitken saw the opportunity and took steps to ensure the election of Mr. Bonar Law.

His success upon that occasion was the more remarkable because he had then been in England for only two or three years, and was largely unknown. Beaverbrook is by birth a Canadian, like Mr. Bonar Law, to whom he is distantly related. As a result of various financial operations, he had made a considerable fortune before he was thirty years of age. No reasonable explanation has ever been given in England for the antipathy to Aitken which was then so widespread in Canada. Possibly it must be regarded as an exemplification of the saying that a prophet has no honour in his own country. For no specific allegation has ever been made against him; while the companies which he promoted not only made money for their promoter but for those who invested in them.[57] Colonel Repington mentions in his diary that a Canadian lady told him why Aitken was so disliked in Canada. It is regrettable that he did not share that, as he did so much other private information, with anyone ready to pay two guineas.

Later (and after the events to which I am now referring) Beaverbrook did his utmost to obtain a favourable press in Canada. When he became Minister of Information (and no one

who was at the meeting of the Unionist War Committee will ever forget the strange reasons which Mr. Lloyd George adduced for having given him that post) he succeeded to some extent.

A small body of recognised experts on foreign affairs, who had done that part of the work before the Ministry was instituted, refused to serve under Lord Beaverbrook. They emigrated to the Foreign Office, where their services were accepted and retained by Lord Hardinge, whom Beaverbrook's protests left coldly indifferent. The latter reorganized his department by bringing in a number of men distinguished in the literary world, and others well known in the City. But a large percentage of the rank and file were Canadians, whose experience of foreign affairs and whose knowledge of foreign languages was as limited as that possessed by Beaverbrook himself. The result was that the work of the Ministry, aside from the cinematograph and amusement part (which was excellently done) was greatly below the required level. It was a constant source of polite amusement to the Maison de la Presse, of which the founder and guiding spirit was the astute and accomplished Philippe Berthelot, who knows all the things of which Beaverbrook is so essentially ignorant, but who, on the other hand, could never have amassed the money which Beaverbrook made in the promotion of companies.

However, the Ministry of Information spent lavishly, as the accounts show; and part of the expenditure went in paying the expenses of Canadian (as well as other overseas) journalists who were brought to England. All this had some effect in dissipating the strange unpopularity which Beaverbrook had incurred in his native country. Although as late as December, 1918, such a well-known newspaper as the *Ottawa Citizen*

stated bluntly that he could never be elected to any office in Canada.

But in the autumn of 1916 Lord Beaverbrook (as he shortly afterwards became) took a leading part in bringing together the elements which overcame Mr. Asquith. It is known that he himself kept a diary, in which he recorded minutely what took place during those momentous weeks. Probably all the facts will never be known unless that journal is one day made public. Even then it will have to be accepted with reserve. Sir Edward (now Lord) Carson told me that the part of it which he had seen attributed to him a rôle he had never played. The truth is that Carson was then, as always, aloof from all intrigue.

Aitken used his influence over Bonar Law to good effect. It was understood that as a reward he was to become President of the Board of Trade in the new Government. But strong objection to that appointment came from various quarters. To his annoyance the office he coveted was allotted to Sir Albert Stanley; and he himself was consoled by a peerage.

After all that has occurred during the last five years it is to-day difficult to realize what a step it then was for Tories deliberately to oust the Liberal Asquith in order to place in office and to serve under their own *bête noir*, the Radical Lloyd George. The primary instinct against such a course must have been specially strong in the breast of Mr. Walter Long, who had himself served under Lord Salisbury, and who was the last of the country squires to make a mark in the House of Commons.

I saw Mr. Long upon various occasions during these weeks. Upon my return to England in October, 1916, after a month spent abroad, I found a letter from him requesting me to call at the Local Government Board. At that interview he asked me to find

out what I could regarding the prevalent feeling about the Government, and to let him know in the course of the following week.

Quoting from my diary:

> "When I saw Mr. Long subsequently I mentioned that the feeling towards the Coalition seemed very much better than it had been in August; that the Government was not only stronger in the country than it had been at the end of last session, but that it was stronger than it had any right to expect; that many people who had opposed the Coalition were now only too anxious to accept and support it on the ground that men who had for two years conducted such a novel business as a great war must necessarily know more about it than any others, even if they had not been the best men in the beginning. I added that Mr. Asquith's speech had made a wonderful impression, and that if he only kept the promises made in it the Government should be safe; but that if, on the other hand, he did the same thing as last session, introduced bills and withdrew them, and showed one way and another that he did not know his own mind, the situation would be worse than ever, as people's hopes had now been raised. Mr. Long disagreed with me as regards the Government running any chance of being defeated.
>
> "Two or three days later I got a telephone message from Mr. Long, and when I went to see him he asked me to write a letter embodying what I

had said, as he wished to show it to Mr. Asquith. I was leaving for Paris at five o'clock that afternoon, and therefore wrote very hurriedly and rather badly a letter to that effect in the intervening couple of hours."

Quoting further from my diary towards the end of November, 1916:

"I saw Mr. Long last Thursday, spending more than two hours with him. He knew that I had already seen X. I suggested that exactly what I pointed out in my letter had happened; that the Government had made the same mistakes as last session, and that as a result they were worse off than ever. He said that that was true, and also admitted that things could not go on as they were. I then pointed out that the only possible successor to Mr. Asquith was Lloyd George; that it might be disappointing that no Conservative or at least no one of a different political tradition from Lloyd George could be found who was capable of being Prime Minister, but the fact was that no such person existed.

"Also that Lloyd George was surrounded by a band of flatterers who were urging him to make the attempt; and that if he ever screwed up his courage to doing it without the assistance of the Unionist leaders, and was successful, he would be cock o' the walk. Mr. Long seemed rather taken aback by this, and kept on repeating 'Cock o' the walk.' He then, however, made a point that even if Lloyd

George made the attempt he would be defeated in the House of Commons. The suggestion was curious as showing how a man who has lived the greater part of his life in the House may be absolutely out of touch with public feeling once that feeling gets out of its ordinary channel. I told Mr. Long (and I believe it to be true) that nothing would help Lloyd George more than an open statement that he did not agree with the way the war was being conducted, followed first by his resignation, and subsequently by his defeat in the House because the Party Whips were against him; that in that event he would soon force a General Election, and would undoubtedly come back triumphant, the country being heartily sick of the House of Commons and its ways. Moreover, that, although resignation was a risk which was often fatal in English political life, yet that the times were extraordinary, and that there was no possible parallel to be drawn between the resignation of Lord Randolph Churchill and that of Mr. Lloyd George, whom the country, rightly or wrongly, wanted to see Prime Minister. I added that the only thing which would prevent the matter going through would be whether or not Lloyd George had the pluck to make the plunge unless he had what he considered sufficient Unionist support first promised him. On this point I admitted I was in some doubt.

"Mr. Long first referred to the possibility of a General Election, and mentioned—what I knew—

that dissolution was the prerogative of the Prime Minister. But he added what I did not know, namely, that on one or two occasions Prime Ministers had exercised that prerogative without giving their colleagues any warning. I think he said that Mr. Balfour's dissolution was one of those occasions.

"He then proceeded to recall how when Mr. Joseph Chamberlain had differed from the other members of the Government he had come to a Cabinet Meeting, had told them so frankly, and had then resigned. And he said that if Mr. Lloyd George would only adopt that plan instead of working outside the Cabinet he would probably get more support than otherwise, and in quarters where he did not expect it.

"However, Mr. Long was mainly insistent that a deputaton should see Mr. Asquith to get him to change his ways. I ventured to argue that all the deputations in the world were hardly likely to change the character of a man of sixty-five; that, as Mr. Long himself had been impressing on me, there probably was no specific thing which the present Government was not doing which Mr. Lloyd George could say he would do, but that he would do things more quickly, which in time of war was almost as important as a question of policy; and that the procrastination which was the Prime Minister's fatal defect was not likely to be changed by any deputation. However, I asked Mr. Long whom he suggested should be on this deputation.

He mentioned the names of Lord Cromer, Lord Milner, Sir Starr Jamieson, and one of the Rothschilds. In casting about for a fifth he mentioned J. P. Morgan. I pointed out that Morgan was an American. Mr. Long would hardly believe this, and at first insisted that Morgan had become a naturalized British subject.

"At Mr. Long's request I said that I would see X and would then write in the course of the next two days. He asked me to see Mr. Bonar Law and discuss the matter with him also. I told him that I did not think any good purpose would be answered by my seeing Mr. Bonar Law, whom I knew very slightly.

"At the end of this conversation Mr. Long, whose political connection probably goes back farther than anyone in the House of Commons, bar five or six, told me several interesting things about the past. He related how he had made up the quarrel caused by Randolph Churchill opening a letter which was not addressed to him. He mentioned that he himself had been put on political committees by Disraeli; and said that he remembered Disraeli even further back than that; that Disraeli had stayed at Rood Ashton when he (Mr. Long) was eight years old, and that he remembered him patting him on the head, saying that he hoped he would go to Parliament, like his father and grandfather, and then, admiring the steel on his velvet suit, and making them the vehicle of a rather fulsome compliment to Mr. Long's mother

upon her taste in having chosen them.

"The following day I wrote to Mr. Long saying that it appeared to be too late for a deputation, even admitting that it might have been useful at any time, and adding that the main point now was that the matter should not go further without the support of Unionist leaders other than those who preferred to cleave to Mr. Asquith."

The Thursday following:

"Mr. Long telephoned yesterday morning asking me to meet him at two o'clock, an easy hour for him, as he never takes any luncheon. I walked with him from the Local Government Board Office to Lansdowne House, and waited for him while he saw Lord Lansdowne. On the way through the park he amused me by pointing out how well Lord Crewe, whom we happened to meet, had done for himself in life, considering that he had no great abilities, although a charming manner. A barony turned into a marquisate, the Garter, and the leadership of the House of Lords, although he is able to speak so little that even in the Lords it is more mumbling than speaking. But Mr. Long added that Lord Crewe's speeches were as pleasant to read as they were otherwise to listen to. He also said that Lord Crewe wrote very good verses, evidently an inherited talent.

"Mr. Long was rather put out by a leader in yesterday's *Times* advocating a dictatorship of three. I told him that nobody considered that that

was practicable. He said he realized now that the view I had taken last week was right, that the matter had gone too far, and that Asquith would probably go. He added that he expected that Lord Lansdowne himself would go likewise. I said that from what I had been told by X. I had no reason to think that Lloyd George would ask Lord Lansdowne to stay; but I did understand that it was agreed that he (Long) should be asked to remain.

"I do not know what Lord Lansdowne told him, but he seemed decidedly more cheerful afterwards."

Wednesday following.

"Asquith has definitely gone. When there was very little risk Lloyd George finally got worked up to making his ultimatum. It really amounted to a demand that the whole responsibility of the war should be given to a small committee, in which Asquith should practically not have any vote. Asquith saw the King on Saturday and then went to Walmer. This was the cue for Lloyd George, who sent a message that the matter could not wait, and must be decided immediately, or otherwise his resignation must take effect. Asquith came back on Sunday; and that afternoon the Unionist members of the Government wrote him that they resigned if Lloyd George did. In fact, they did send in their resignations, but withdrew them when Asquith replied that the matter raised by Lloyd George was not settled. Asquith then accepted Lloyd George's

terms. But on Monday, urged by some of his political friends (and chiefly, I understand, by McKenna), he withdrew his acceptance. He then saw that he would be deserted and was forced to resign. The King sent for Bonar Law, who said that he would try to form a Government, but, as a matter of fact, he did not make any attempt to do so. Before the King gave the task to Lloyd George there was a conference at the Palace between Lloyd George, Asquith, and Bonar Law. I believe that Asquith would then have been willing to accept the terms imposed by Lloyd George; but the latter was only too glad to have him out of the way, and would only consider the proposal formerly made as being definitely rejected. In the result Lloyd George undertook to form a Government, and is now doing so."

Saturday following.

"Mr. Long sent me a message asking me to come to the Local Government Board and go with him to Paddington, as he was leaving for Rood Ashton for the week-end. He is, I think, rather glad to be Colonial Secretary. But he was very much annoyed by an attack in the *Times* this morning saying that he and Mr. Balfour ought to have been left out of the Government. As a matter of fact, Lord Northcliffe is very prejudiced against Mr. Long. About two weeks ago, when this affair was coming on, X. spoke to me about a dinner he thought of arranging to bring them together; but later he said he had decided not to do so, as

Northcliffe might quite possibly be rude to Long."

Briand, like Asquith, resigned in December, 1916. But the effect of these two changes of Government was vastly different. Briand reorganized his Cabinet, pending his retirement three months later, when he made way for a successor who, for the time being, more fully enjoyed the confidence of Parliament. But the disappearance of Mr. Asquith in England signalled a revolution in the mode of conducting the struggle. Thereafter the country was inspired to make efforts and to submit to sacrifices of which neither its Allies nor its enemies had thought it capable. The winning of the war was placed before and above all else. The accumulations of the past and the prospects of the future were alike used towards that end without any count being taken. The statesman who was thus able to call forth the utmost vitality and resolution in his own country soon took the leading part in the councils of the Allies.

Macaulay once wrote that "Of almost every man who has been distinguished in the political world it may be said that the course which he pursued, and the effect which he produced, depended less upon his personal qualities than on the circumstances in which he was placed." It is not decrying Mr. Lloyd George's merits to say that he and the occasion were made for each other.

The passage of Mr. Asquith meant something else, which, while less important, was nevertheless far reaching. It sounded the knell of Gladstonian Liberalism; and, by a curious chance, enabled the Conservative party to ward off its own dissolution, and possibly to get a new lease of life, by adopting a great Radical leader.

CHAPTER VII.

The French Political World

The present period in French political history dates from the day when it became apparent that M. Clemenceau would not be elected President of the Republic. Although Clemenceau had at first waved aside the suggestion that he should go to the Elysée, he finally admitted that he was being "carried" there by the force of public opinion. It was only three days before the election that the carefully prepared intrigue saw the light of day. Maréchal Foch was in no small degree responsible for its success, although not for its inception—a fact which would not have been generally known had it not been for the indiscretion of l'Abbé Wetterlée.

Many months before Clemenceau had decided that if he could arrange it, M. Millerand should be his successor as Président du Conseil. Millerand had been Minister of War in 1915. His administration of that office has been greatly criticized. It is difficult to form a judgment as to the justice of the allegations made against him. In brief, they amount to an accusation that his policy was such as to waste the lives of many tens of thousands to no good purpose. The feeling about this is still so bitter that within the last eighteen months the Rapporteur Général of an important Parliamentary Committee, who has been a member of more than one Cabinet, mentioned to me that he never went to see Millerand (who was then Prime Minister) about the reports to be made, as he wished to avoid any contact

with him; but that, of course, he was obliged to receive le Président du Conseil when the latter reversed the usual procedure and called upon him.

Clemenceau had not been upon good terms with Millerand for some years. The difference originated before the war. There is a certain piquancy in recalling that when the Government left Paris to go to Bordeaux, in 1914, Millerand's last warning to the Military Governor who was left in charge—Galliéni—was to beware of what Clemenceau might attempt to do. Nevertheless, when some four years later Clemenceau wanted a Haut Commissaire for Alsace-Lorraine he turned to Millerand, disregarded the past, and persuaded him to accept the post. Later he decided that Millerand was the man upon whom he could best rely to ensure the execution of the Treaty of Versailles. I see by my diary that as early as April, 1919, that a person well known in the French political world brought me that news.

Millerand had taken certain steps towards the constitution of a Cabinet with the idea that Clemenceau would be President of the Republic. When in the middle of the week it was evident that M. Deschanel's[58] friends (or M. Clemenceau's enemies) had gained the day, it was probably necessary to make a few changes.

The election at Versailles was devoid of interest. The result was a foregone conclusion. It was very different from the day seven years previously when Clemenceau and M. Camille Pelletan had done their bitter utmost to defeat Poincaré and to send M. Pams to the Elysée. It was also a dull day in Paris. Mr. Lloyd George was not, despite the statement in the newspapers, at Versailles, as in other circumstances he doubtless would have

been, to honour M. Clemenceau. Instead, he lunched somewhat gloomily at Claridge's Hotel, and had much to say about the ingratitude of nations.

Woodrow Wilson repudiated!

Clemenceau rejected!

Was anyone safe?

Apart from supervising the execution of the Treaty it was thought that any Government would have to consider the revision of the Constitution. In England the power of the Cabinet has steadily increased at the expense of Parliament, which to-day is much less potent than it was a quarter of a century ago. One of the results of five years of warfare has been to lessen the direct responsibility of Ministers of the Crown to the House of Commons, and to place the Prime Minister almost in the position of a president of a republic.

But in France Parliament has increased its influence out of all due proportion. It has absorbed the greater share of the power, leaving, on one side, a President who is to a large extent a figure-head, and upon the other an underpaid judiciary which is dependent upon its will. It was thought that this might be rectified, and that the whole balance might be readjusted, by augmenting the powers of the President, which would add to the security of the Government of the day. The project secured all the more adherents because the men of the Republic have never forgotten that the Constitution of 1875 was drafted by a Royalist majority: while there was a general impression that a mistake had been made in adopting the English in preference to the American system.

It was, I think, Sir Henry Maine who wrote that the King of

England reigned without governing, that the President of the United States governed without reigning, but that it had remained for the President of the French Republic neither to govern nor to reign. The accuracy of this statement is questionable. The French constitution gives the President very considerable power; although it is true that every presidential decree must be countersigned by a minister as well as signed by the President. But no President has ever cared to take any initiative or to exercise his full powers since the misfortune which befell Maréchal MacMahon on the Seize Mai. While the fact that the office conferred little real power was accentuated in recent years by the coincidence that neither M. Loubet nor M. Fallières, though both worthy men, were of a calibre which enabled them to be anything but respectable nonentities.

M. Poincaré, with his great intellectual attainments, and behind him his career as a leader of the Paris Bar, would in normal times doubtless have made some effort to break away from what had become a tradition; for although "un homme timide"—of which one of the results is his apparent coldness—M. Poincaré is a man of considerable resolution. But the advent of the war forbade any experiments of that kind: and even M. Poincaré's personal letter to King George in the days preceding the declaration of hostilities had to be assented to by his ministers.

But M. Poincaré himself, although he recently wrote that the inaction imposed on a President of the Republic was galling, strongly urged in the same article that no attempt should be made to revise a constitution which, upon the whole, had well served its purpose for half a century.

Apparently M. Millerand concurred in the view that the

powers are in the constitution if the President wants to exercise them. For although some days before his election in September, 1920, he issued a statement to the effect that if he became President he would take an active part in directing the policy of the country, he did not intimate that he thought that involved any constitutional change.

On the other hand, M. Briand was one of the many who some years ago were credited with holding the opinion that some revision was essential in order to increase the independence of the executive and to lessen the overwhelming influence of Parliament. It is probable, however, that he was well content not to raise the question. For within the past two years there has been a very general revulsion of feeling, and for a curious reason. An eminent statesman, who was a member of M. Briand's Cabinet, told me on several occasions during the war that one of the first duties of Parliament after peace was obtained would be to extend the presidential powers. Since then he and many of his political friends have changed their mind. The lesson they saw in the case of Mr. Wilson was that it is better to have a President whose powers are too limited than one whose powers are too wide.

The political position of France differs from that of England in that there are at least half a dozen men who might be called to be Prime Minister to-morrow without evoking any surprise in the country. There are almost innumerable former Prime Ministers. The list is not exhausted by citing MM. de Freycinet, Ribot, Clemenceau, Caillaux, Barthou, Viviani, Millerand, Doumergue, Painlevé, Leygues, Briand, Méline, and Monis.[59]

Some of these can never again be in office on account of their advanced age. Others are unlikely to be so for various

reasons. But there remains a number who are quite "Ministrable": while it would be difficult to give a full list of those who have held some Cabinet rank and who are possibilities as Prime Ministers.

Aristide Briand, who was recently Président du Conseil for the sixth time, is 59 years of age. He is an avocat who has not practised for many years. M. Briand is supposed to be indolent, but upon occasion no one can show more firmness and energy. He made his reputation as reporter of the law separating Church and State. But the feat which clings most to his name is the quashing of a widespread railway strike, by calling the employés to the colours, and thus placing them under martial law.

Although he began his career with socialistic tendencies Briand has long been practically an independent. For some years his name was not inscribed upon the list of any group, but lately he has been classed as a Socialist Republican. He is the greatest of French parliamentarians; so far ahead of everyone else that he is often inclined to trust somewhat too much to his power to win the day from the tribune. If he is not the greatest of orators amongst the deputies, he is second only to Viviani, whose speaking is of quite a different order.

M. Briand is probably the only French politician, except M. Poincaré, who can hold his own against Mr. Lloyd George; although he is thought to have been too yielding at Cannes. This is partly because he is somewhat of the same type. M. Millerand is perhaps a strong, and is certainly an obstinate man. He always knows his case thoroughly as befits a lawyer. But, as was patent when he was Prime Minister, he cannot "manœuvrer sur place," a defect vital to anyone dealing with Mr. Lloyd

George.

Briand also had the advantage of the guidance, and of trusting to the guidance of, M. Philippe Berthelot. The latter is the most remarkable member of a remarkable family. His father, a celebrated scientist who was almost equally well known as a free-thinker in a former generation, made a brief apparition at the Quai d'Orsay as Minister of Foreign Affairs. One of his brothers is M. André Berthelot, who is both a senator and a figure in the world of high finance.

Philippe Berthelot is one of the ablest and perhaps the most "séduisant" man in France. His literary and artistic interests and talents, coupled with his delight in the intercourse of others, have made him a notable figure in all classes of Parisian society. His work as a diplomatist has always borne witness to his strong personality. He has created many attachments, has aroused some enmities, and excited more jealousies: but generally he has been able to dispel prejudices which were acquired before their holders had met him.

M. Berthelot's ill-wishers thought that the troubles of a bank of which his brother was the chairman afforded an opening for checking a career which was too brilliant to please many of them. They made the most of the opportunity; whilst on the other hand some of those who had reason to be grateful to him did not rally to his support until they saw which way the wind blew. But the incident served to show Berthelot's courage and imperturbation.[60]

At the Quai d'Orsay he has nearly always rendered himself indispensable to the Minister of the day. It is true that M. Ribot never entirely overcame a fear that Berthelot might absorb some of his own jealously guarded power, or might become too

influential. But M. Clemenceau, who arrived at the Foreign Office holding Berthelot in detestation, within a few months placed the greatest reliance upon him and had the greatest confidence in him.

When Lord Derby came to Paris as Ambassador, Lord Bertie told him to beware of one man among all others—Berthelot. For the latter had never been able to advance in Lord Bertie's good graces any more than he has in those of M. Poincaré. This warning, coming from one who had represented his country for so many years in Paris, was not a good recommendation. But within eighteen months the new Ambassador had formed his own opinion. I recollect Lord Derby recounting to me this injunction of his predecessor, and his own impression that while Philippe Berthelot was supremely nationalist, he was a sincere friend of Great Britain, and a firm supporter of the Entente.

But with Briand M. Berthelot has always been on the closest terms. It was indeed the idea that Berthelot was essentially Briand's man which had primarily indisposed M. Clemenceau towards him. With the return of Briand to the Quai d'Orsay Berthelot's position was assured, while it was further fortified by the retirement of M. Paléologue, who is generally held responsible for the ill-advised recognition of Wrangel by M. Millerand's Government.

In the autumn of 1920, when the Leygues Ministry was only a stop-gap, it was felt that only a Briand Cabinet (or possibly a Poincaré-Briand combination) would be strong enough either to induce Mr. Lloyd George to take steps to enforce the execution of the Treaty, or to act alone if Great Britain declined to move. From the day he formed his Government M. Briand showed that

he was impressed by the fact that France has counted upon and must get from Germany the reparation contemplated by the Treaty: while as a practical politician with a keen sense of atmosphere he realised that the temper both of the country and of Parliament was such that any Government which did not make headway in that direction would not last long. But although M. Briand is both by nature and by experience better fitted than any other French statesman to hold his own against Mr. Lloyd George, and while he is not excelled by the British Prime Minister either in resourcefulness or in force of character, he was always at a certain disadvantage in his negotiations with Downing Street.

Mr. Lloyd George starts with a certain preponderant authority by reason of the fact that he is the sole survivor of the makers of the Treaty. But Briand's European reputation in the conduct of foreign affairs was a sufficient set-off to a claim the value of which is daily becoming more doubtful: it is not a proud boast to have manufactured a machine which one cannot or will not make operative.

Mr. Lloyd George is secure in his majority. Relatively he is a permanency. When he deals with any French Minister of Foreign Affairs he knows that at the next conference he may be faced by another—one more or one less tractable. He knows that the result of the negotiations of the day, and even his own conduct, may have its repercussion in the French Parliament, and may result in the downfall of the Government. Many Ministers have passed in and out of the Quai d'Orsay while Mr. Lloyd George has remained firmly in power. Even if there be any basis for the accusation that he sometimes subordinates his foreign policy to his political prospects, he is only bound to do so in view of the next General Election, in view of what the

country may say at the polls at some more or less distant date. His fate is not always in the balance from day to day.

Mr. Lloyd George is in office by virtue of a Unionist majority. At times his Government has done things of which that majority did not sincerely approve. More than once, alike after the Armistice and since the Treaty of Versailles was signed, the Unionist War Committee or its successor sent protesting deputations to the then leader, Mr. Bonar Law, to state emphatically that the party was not in accord with the proposals of the Government. More than once Mr. Bonar Law intimated in his quiet and precise manner that the alternative might be a General Election; and the members of the deputation returned to whence they came with their tails between their legs.

Mr. Lloyd George, however, has no rival in the House of Commons. He certainly would have had nothing to fear had Mr. Bonar Law not retired.

But the situation of M. Briand or of any French Prime Minister, is manifestly different. A Government which wishes to enforce the execution of the Treaty is confronted by the united opposition of all the socialist deputies; while it must also count upon a certain number of adverse votes from nearly all the other groups—some on the ground that it has been too exacting, and others, for the reason that it has been too feeble, either in its demands upon Germany or in its conversations with the British Cabinet.

In the vote taken on May 26, 1921, when M. Briand asked the Chambre des Députés to approve what he had done in London, the Government was sustained by a majority of 234, the figures being 391 as against 157.

But this minority of 157 was made up as follows:

14 members of the Republican and Socialist Entente;
27 members of the Republican Democratic Entente;
12 members of the Republican and Democratic Left;
16 Independents;
7 Radicals and Radical Socialists;
48 Socialists;
14 representatives of the Left;
12 Socialist Communists;
7 Deputies belonging to no group.

Of the forty-seven deputies who abstained from voting, forty-five belonged to one or other of the groups above mentioned, but the remaining two were members of the Republican and Social Action; while of the eighteen deputies who had leave of absence, one belonged to a group not yet named, the Socialist Republican.

It is obvious that a legislature divided into so many diverse fractions is at all times a mine which may explode and shatter the Cabinet of the day. Any one of a dozen combinations may cause the outburst. The Prime Minister is therefore obliged to walk circumspectly. If members of the House of Commons do not approve of Mr. Lloyd George's policy he can send them back to their constituencies—to expensive uncertainty. But if the deputies do not approve of the Président du Conseil they can cast him out of office without themselves running any risk of having immediately to answer to their electors. Of the science of managing the French Parliament M. Briand is the greatest living exponent.

It is noteworthy that M. Barthou was in the Briand Cabinet,

and is in the Poincaré. For it is Barthou who in May, 1920, made in the Chambre a bitter attack upon Lloyd George's treatment of France and his disregard of French rights under the Treaty. Barthou had been incited by Briand to speak in this sense; although I believe that Briand thought he went too far, and congratulated him less when he descended from the tribune than he had encouraged him before. It is a curious coincidence that the very same afternoon Lloyd George spoke in the House of Commons and made certain references to the position of France which for the moment went far to remove the dissatisfaction then felt in that country. But the inclusion of Barthou in recent Ministries is a forewarning that the French claims were at last to be forcibly maintained and vigorously pressed. M. Barthou is one of those who may possibly again be Prime Minister. He was responsible for the Three Years' Military Service Law, passed shortly before the war: a courageous act which earned him the undying hatred of the Socialists. He is equally well known for his literary and historical works, and is as proud of being a member of the Académie Française as of his political distinction.

The two men who were Clemenceau's most trusted colleagues at the Peace Conference are still in the Chambre—M. Loucheur and André Tardieu. The former is a contractor, who before the war had amassed a fortune which the subsequent course of events is said greatly to have increased. He has all the characteristics of an energetic and practical man of business, added to an exceptional power of lucid expression when dealing with figures.[61]

In several conversations which I had with Loucheur in 1920, before he again took office, I gathered that he thought that Lloyd George was not giving France proper support in enforcing the

execution of the Treaty. He made no secret of the fact that if he was in power he would protect French interests by independent action. This statement he subsequently made good by conducting direct negotiations with Rathenau for the reparation by Germany of the devastated districts.

Loucheur is politically ambitious. That led him to aid Briand in forming his Government and thus to break with the more devoted followers of M. Clemenceau. Of the latter the most conspicuous is André Tardieu. In 1914 he was one of the editors of *Le Temps*, and was also known as the author of several books on foreign affairs After passing some time at the Front he made his reputation as French High Commissioner in the United States. Upon his return Clemenceau took him into his Cabinet. Tardieu is undoubtedly the ablest man of his generation (he is to-day 46 years of age) in political life. His manner, however, makes him more enemies than friends. At present he spends his time, both in the Chambre and outside, in defending the Treaty and denouncing those who do not see to its execution; apparently forgetting that he himself is one of those mainly responsible for neglecting to include proper automatic penalties for its non-fulfilment.

Loucheur and Tardieu were the only two members of Clemenceau's Cabinet who could speak openly to and hold their own against him. After Clemenceau resigned they were political allies until they differed about Loucheur entering the Briand Ministry.

In the Senate one of the outstanding figures is Paul Doumer, who was recently Minister of Finance.[62]

Millerand, Briand, and others were at one time Socialists, although to-day none are stronger champions of established

authority. But Doumer has always been a Republican of the early type, making his own way in the world by his own efforts; simple in his mode of life; and impeccably honest. About fifteen years ago he was nearly elected President of the Republic; the margin by which Fallières defeated him was not very great. Later he was Governor-General of Indo-Chine. When the war broke out he stayed in Paris when the Government (of which he was not then a member) and others went to Bordeaux. On September 4 he wrote to Galliéni the following letter:

> "Mon Cher Général,
>
> "Je viens vous faire un amical et pressant appel.
>
> "Puisque les choses de la politique ont tourné de telle sorte que je n'ai pu participer au pouvoir, à l'heure seule où le pouvoir est tentant, donnez-moi, je vous prie, la possibilité d'agir de travailler à la chose publique.
>
> "Appelez-moi près de vous à un titre quelconque.
>
> "Par exemple, créez à votre Cabinet un service ou un secrétariat des affaires civiles, et appelez-moi à le diriger.
>
> "Je vous débarrasserai des broutilles, dans le mesure où vous déciderez, et je vous préparerai les éléments de solution des affaires importantes.
>
> "Je sais commander; je saurai donc obéir.
>
> "Et puis, ce que me fait vous demander cela avec insistence, c'est que la défense de Paris peut

devenir difficile, que les heures tragiques peuvent arriver et que je voudrais pouvoir tomber, en service, à côté de vous, et non comme un bâdaud qui va voir où pleuvent les coups.

"Si vous prenez tout de suite une décision favorable, envoyez-moi simplement un ordre. Sinon, donnez-moi l'occasion de vous voir.

"Votre tout dévoué,

"(Signé) PAUL DOUMER.

"Il va sans dire que si je suis appelé au Gouvernement militaire j'y consacrerai tous mes instants et ne m'occuperai plus de rien autre."

Galliéni telegraphed to the Government to ask if he might accept Doumer's offer, and received a reply telling him that he might use his own discretion. Later another message came saying that the Cabinet had decided that it could not authorise him to do as Doumer had suggested. But Galliéni had already acted, and Doumer, who had begun at ten o'clock in the morning, had completed his organisation before noon.

Later, Doumer, as President of the Army Commission of the Senate, was one of those active in insisting that the powers of Joffre should be curtailed.

When Briand made him his Finance Minister he was President of the Senate Finance Committee.

Few men in France were more sorely tried than M. Doumer during the war, his three eldest sons all being killed.

M. Viviani is the greatest orator in France. He has been, and

in all probability will again be Prime Minister; but at the present time he shows no desire for any immediate return to office. M. Painlevé (whose career has been recounted at some length in a previous chapter) is also not at the end of his political career, but he is obviously out of touch with the present Chambre des Députés.

There remains M. Poincaré, the strongest and most uncompromising protagonist of the integral execution of the Treaty: although in his opinion the Treaty does not go far enough; as was shown when he was the sole supporter of Foch's protests against the abandonment of the French demand for Allied occupation of the Rhine country.

As President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate he was a power with which the Government of the day had to reckon. Moreover, his influence was increased by his political articles in the *Revue des Deux Mondes, Le Temps*, and other publications. It was no secret that he refused to join M. Briand's Government in December, 1920, because he hoped one day to be at the Quai d'Orsay, while probably being at the same time Président du Conseil. This aspiration has since been realised.

M. Poincaré is likely to have more affirmative success in negotiations with Mr. Lloyd George than is any other French statesman. Unlike Briand he will keep the British Prime Minister at arm's length. Doubtless he will achieve more by that method; for few politicians can gain anything by coming to close quarters with Lloyd George. But Poincaré will treat in that fashion as much by necessity as from premeditated design. It is impossible for him to unbend. He is not genial as was always M. Briand. He will not lose his temper as did sometimes M. Clemenceau. But unceasingly he will be reserved, and almost

stern. He will be quite unaffected by the Prime Minister's moods. The expansive and irritable moments will leave him equally indifferent. The one will not amuse him; the other will not abash him. The Welsh charm will not fascinate the inexorable "homme de Lorraine." Poincaré will be tenacious for what he considers the rights of his country; and it will be beyond even the Prime Minister's well-known powers to divert him from the object he is pursuing. Moreover, he will be on his guard. For when he read the Government report of the San Remo conversations he was impressed by the fact that Mr. Lloyd George had spoken in no friendly way of the French claims.

Poincaré's lucid intelligence and orderly mind recoil from the new system of successive conferences, which settle little, and which leave nothing settled for long. He has already expressed his abhorrence of what he calls "cinema diplomacy." His own position is clear. Time and again during the last two years he has put on record his view that France must get what the Treaty gives her. So long as Mr. Lloyd George admits in the main M. Poincaré's contentions on that subject, so long (but so long only) will they agree. Their conversation at Boulogne was satisfactory precisely because Poincaré got his way upon all the essential points.

Poincaré also has the country, and probably Parliament, more solidly behind him than had any of his predecessors since Clemenceau; and it is Mr. Lloyd George who has put them there. He is the first President of the Republic who has ever held office after leaving the Elysée, although there is to-day another in the Senate—M. Deschanel.

The General Election of 1919 produced some surprises in the way of unexpected defeats, but two years have not brought

forward many new men of outstanding promise.

One of the most marked figures in the new Chambre is General de Castelnau. When the election of Millerand to succeed Deschanel as President of the Republic brought the members of the Senate and the Chambre together I noticed that de Castelnau was almost the only one for whom there was any spontaneous applause when he ascended the tribune to cast his ballot. Undoubtedly that was largely a personal tribute: but de Castelnau is a possible Minister of War.

In the Chambre a young deputy, M. Forgeot, has given proofs of an eloquence which is impressive at the moment, but which is as yet devoid of a sense of parliamentary atmosphere. In the Senate M. de Jouvenel (who is one of the editors of *Le Matin*) quickly made a name by a few speeches which were equally interesting and thoughtful. But upon the whole it does not seem to be a Parliament of new talents.

It is a current saying that the new Chambre does not represent the country; that it leans too much towards the Right, and that it is reactionary. I am inclined to think that that estimate is inaccurate. The Chambre reflects the feeling of France that Germany must be made to pay; and the fear of France that the extreme Left would not see that that was done. Moreover, the Socialists, the Communists, and all the groups which in France correspond to the most advanced wing of the Labour Party, are at present hopelessly divided, and engaged in active warfare among themselves. This arises partly from the fact that many of them, being small proprietors, are opposed to Bolshevism. But the courage shown by Clemenceau and his immediate predecessors during the war in not adopting Lloyd George's policy of yielding to all demands, leaving the future to right

matters, is one of the reasons why in France there have been fewer labour troubles than in England, and no unconstitutional menace to the State.

There were many predictions that the senatorial elections in January would show that the Left was gaining; but in the actual result there was practically no alteration. The three elections which took place in July, 1921, were, considered together, a reverse which may possibly indicate that the Bloc National has passed its high-water mark of power. But their importance should not be exaggerated as local influences played an important part.

The change will probably not come until the country feels more assured than it does to-day that Germany will meet her obligations.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAILLAUX

No study of political possibilities in France would be complete if it ignored M. Caillaux. It is quite possible that he will never return to power. On the other hand it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that he may once again be Président du Conseil. I consider that contingency more unlikely than otherwise; but, in view of what may develop in regard to the execution of the Treaty not entirely out of the question.

Joseph Caillaux is now 59 years of age; practically the same age as M. Briand, who was born a few months earlier.

I have neither any sympathy for, nor faith in, the policy which throughout his political career M. Caillaux has constantly advocated. I believe that it would have been as fatal to his own country as it was in some respects inimical to England. But it is impossible to accuse Caillaux of being an opportunist—much less a political adventurer. Upon this latter point there is in England a very general misconception—quite in keeping with our prevalent ignorance about the political personages of other countries. I was once asked by a member of the then Government how Caillaux managed to get a foothold in public life—whether he had not begun as a demagogue. The fact is that no one is less of a political filibuster than Caillaux. Many French hommes d'état of the present day have by their own praiseworthy efforts raised themselves to power and eminence from origins which were quite obscure. Others owe their

prominence to intrigues which are less laudable. But Caillaux was born in the political purple. He is, I think, the only Cabinet or ex-Cabinet Minister alive in France to-day who is also the son of a Cabinet Minister.

Caillaux's father was a member of the Duc de Broglie's Government at the time of the Seize Mai episode.

This political connection, as well as the fact that he sprang from perhaps rather better stock than the majority of French politicians, has been partly responsible for a certain arrogance which sat oddly upon the leader of a Radical party. M. Joseph Reinach once said to me: "Caillaux was brought up on the laps of duchesses"; referring to the world into which he was brought in contact through his father's friendship with the Duc de Broglie and others of the Faubourg St. Germain. While he recounted how he was equally annoyed and shocked (for M. Reinach, as became the disciple of Gambetta, was first and last a Republican) when, in the lobby of the Chambre des Députés, Caillaux said with some contempt of one of their colleagues who had interrupted their conversation: "il n'est pas de notre monde."

Joseph Caillaux inherits from his father (who was at one time president of the P.L.M. Railway) a moderate fortune. For some years he was in the Government service and rose to be an Inspector of Finance. In 1898 he was elected as one of the deputies for the Department of the Sarthe. Within a year he became, through a succession of accidents, Minister of Finance in the Waldeck-Rousseau Government.

Caillaux's policy before the war may fairly be summed up by saying that he wanted to see a general settlement of all outstanding differences with Germany—believing that the safety

of his own country and the peace of Europe would in that way be better preserved than by a close alliance with Great Britain. He was not opposed to an Entente; still less was he hostile to England. But he was firmly convinced—as were many Frenchmen before him, and as are many to-day—that, if there was any partnership, England would get the lion's share, and would simply make use of France to serve her own ends. "Désinteresser l'Empire Germanique, comme fut désinteressée la Grande Bretagne, par des concessions raisonables, c'est la vrai politique. Il ne me faudra recourir à une autre que si l'Allemagne se montre trop exigéante." Such is Caillaux's own statement of his foreign policy.[63]

I believe that Caillaux was profoundly wrong in his view that France would be the loser by an alliance with Great Britain: though circumstances force me to admit that those in power in England to-day are doing their utmost to prove to France that he was right. But whatever his error of judgment, it was an opinion which, as a Frenchman, he had every right (if not much reason) to hold.

But, going one step further, Caillaux has been accused of making a bad bargain for, or of betraying (the stories vary between these two degrees), his own country in the Agadir negotiations.

Laying aside rumours, and basing one's judgment only upon admitted facts and documents, the truth seems to be as follows: when M. Caillaux became Président du Conseil in 1911 he asked M. Léon Bourgeois to become Minister of Foreign Affairs. M. Bourgeois, following his almost invariable custom (it is no secret that he has refused nearly every office in the State more than once), declined. M. Caillaux then offered the

post to M. Poincaré, who likewise rejected the proposal. In his embarrassment he then turned to M. de Selves. M. Caillaux himself has written that he was encouraged to take this course by M. Clemenceau, who, when Prime Minister, had himself thought of sending M. de Selves to the Quai d'Orsay. Be that as it may, this apparently innocent appointment was destined to be the cause of lasting trouble for M. Caillaux. No one who knows the former Préfet of the Seine will question the statement that he is one of the most amiable of men—perhaps too amiable. It is only a few months ago that he was ousted from the Chairmanship of the Senate Committee of Foreign Affairs in order to make way for M. Poincaré—the contention of his opponents being that, in his desire to please, he constantly yielded to the wishes of the Government of the day. In brief, M. de Selves' predominant characteristic has always been tact rather than strength of character. This agreeable personage was ill-fitted either to keep in check that restless activity which always led Caillaux to dabble in something closely resembling intrigue; or to hold his own against the somewhat brutal, but very competent M. Kiderlen-Waechter in the crisis which was fast approaching. For it was only some days after M. Caillaux took office that Germany sent the gunboat *Panther* to Agadir.

Who was responsible for and what was the object of that action are still open questions. It has been suggested that it was simply one of those impulsive movements of the Kaiser which so often embarrassed his advisers. I see little to support that hypothesis, and much to lead one to believe that it was a deliberate action of the German Government at the instigation of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, M. de Kiderlen-Waechter. What is more doubtful is the motive. My own view is that the primary purpose was to test the strength of the understanding

between England and France. The astute Kiderlen-Waechter was somewhat at a loss to know to what extent the Entente was solid—what strain it would really bear if words had to make way for deeds. But what he clearly understood was that some knowledge upon this point was essential for the direction of German foreign policy. He realised that the result of this despatch of the *Panther* would indicate whether France could still be bullied, or whether it was the beginning of a new period when bluster alone would no longer serve any useful end.

The premature death of M. de Kiderlen-Waechter was undoubtedly a loss, the full effect of which Germany only felt during the war. He was somewhat coarse both in his perceptions and in his ways. His mode of life undermined his constitution and shortened his days. While he was in frequent friction with his subordinates in the diplomatic services because their wives did not always care to receive a certain lady with whom his relations were a subject for much comment. It was typical of him that he saw nothing extraordinary in choosing a period when the situation between the two countries was very critical to make an excursion across the frontier with the Baronne de Y. Although they were travelling incognito there was always a possibility that the German Secretary of Foreign Affairs might be recognised; which, in the exasperated state of public feeling, might have led to an unpleasant incident. The Quai d'Orsay was alarmed. Caillaux, therefore, instructed the Préfet of the Department in question to welcome the German statesman officially, and even went to the length of having a photograph taken of him and his companion. Kiderlen-Waechter was greatly annoyed at this interruption of his holidays; but he was obliged to beat a precipitate retreat to Germany. However, what he lacked in finesse he made up for in the directness of his actions

and the clarity of his vision. He was under no delusion about the dangerous incompetency of the Kaiser or the mediocrity of the Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg. His letters to his friend, the Baronne de Y. (of which only a part have been published), makes this delightfully clear. In his correspondence the Kaiser is known as "la fourrure," and the Chancellor of the Empire as "la petite bête." Kiderlen-Waechter throughout shows his contempt for a pair whom he calls "les deux vieilles femmes." In July, 1911, the British and German fleets were to meet in Norwegian waters, where they were both manœuvring. Unfortunately the date was one day before the Kaiser's visit to Norway came to an end. Kiderlen-Waechter took alarm. "Avec son tempérament, en vue de deux grandes flots, il perdra tout équilibre, dépassera les bornes, et fera Dieu sait quelles bêtises," he writes to the Baronne de Y. The Foreign Secretary, therefore, discloses his fears to our Ambassador, Sir Edward Goschen, and gets him to arrange that the date should be changed. Telling the Baronne de Y. what he has done, and referring again to the Kaiser, he writes: "Dans son exubérance il dirait et ferait des choses qui rendraient les Anglais méfiants, parce que—ne connaissant pas son étourderie—ils croiraient qu'il veut les compromettre aux yeux de leurs amis. . . . Et avec tout cela, nous n'aurions, en réalité, aucun but politique, rien que l'amusement de la fourrure."

In the negotiations which ensued Berlin was the centre. France was ably represented by M. Jules Cambon. But from the outset that eminent diplomat seemed to feel that the support of the Quai d'Orsay was not sufficient, and that in order to ensure a successful conclusion it was desirable that M. Caillaux himself should take an active and personal part. As early as July 10th, 1911, M. Cambon wrote a confidential letter to M. Caillaux:

“C’est M. de Kiderlen qui conduira la négociation au point de vue allemand, mais il est bon qu’il sente qu’au point de vue français vous y avez la main.”

It is clear, both from this and from subsequent letters of M. Cambon’s, that Caillaux’s intervention was at the suggestion of the French Ambassador himself—who considered that it would be in the best interests of France. Caillaux promptly supported the Ambassador. Whether in so doing he usurped the functions of the Minister of Foreign Affairs is another and a more trivial question. Undoubtedly Caillaux offended M. de Selves and his friends—and in the end paid dearly for doing so.

I have no intention of entering into the details of that conflict. But Caillaux’s greater and higher responsibility—his duty towards his country—is covered by the fact that it was in answer to the Ambassador’s own appeal that he came to his assistance; and that in the result the successful issue of the negotiations was largely due to Caillaux himself. Such at least was the opinion of M. Cambon—whose judgment is not to be lightly disputed. Writing to Caillaux on October 23rd, 1911, from Berlin, he expresses the hope that he may be introduced to Madame Caillaux when he next goes to Paris, and adds: “Et je serais heureux que ce voyage pût être prochain, car ce serait la preuve que la négociation à laquelle vous avez présidé et qui fera tant d’honneur à votre prévoyance d’homme d’Etat est heureusement terminée.” While on November 3rd the Ambassador writes again: “Je crois que je puis enfin vous féliciter d’avoir mené à bien par votre persévérance et votre volonté, personelle l’œuvre de notre accord marocain.”

There remains the more grave accusation that M. Caillaux had negotiations with the German Embassy in Paris, through a

private channel unknown either to M. Cambon or to M. de Selves. The facts are that between July 25th and 28th a certain M. Fondère, who was of French nationality, acted as intermediary between M. de Lancken, Counsellor of the German Embassy, and M. Caillaux—the intrigue having been set in motion by M. de Lancken. On July 28th M. de Selves communicated to M. Caillaux two telegrams which have since become famous under the name of "les dépêches vertes." These were two despatches from the German Ambassador, M. Schoen, to the German Foreign Office. For some unknown reason the German Embassy sent these telegrams in an old cipher which had not been used for some time, and of which the French Foreign Office had the key. The messages were therefore deciphered by M. de Selves' subordinates; and as is customary in such cases, the translations were written upon green paper. The telegrams contain an account of the Fondère-Lancken conversations which is more or less (although not exactly) in accord with that given by M. Caillaux himself. The really important part is the last sentence of the second telegram, dated 9.35 p.m., July 27th: "Caillaux demande instamment qu'on ne fasse rien connaître à Cambon de ses overtures."

On the morning of July 28th M. de Selves communicated these intercepted telegrams to M. Caillaux. According to the latter's report of this interview, M. de Selves made no complaint about M. Caillaux having had negotiations which had been kept secret from him, but did draw Caillaux's attention to the statement which exacted that the Wilhelmstrasse should say nothing about them to M. Cambon. Caillaux denied that he had ever made such a request; and said that, on the contrary, he was simply getting information which might assist M. Cambon in his conversations with Kiderlen-Waechter. Indeed, on July 29th

Caillaux did actually send M. Pietri to Berlin to tell M. Cambon of the Fondère-Lancken conversations. Would he have done so had it not been for the discovery of the telegrams by the Quai d'Orsay? Was Kiderlen-Waechter right when, in writing to the Baronne de Y. on July 29th, after saying that Lancken had come from Paris to discuss the Fondère conversations, he comments on Caillaux's desire of secrecy, adding that he had known for some time that there was a certain rivalry between Cambon and Caillaux as to which should have the credit of making a satisfactory arrangement with Germany?

My own belief is that Caillaux probably was responsible for the injunction contained in the telegram. But I am inclined to think that the whole affair arose not from any desire either to impede or to forestall M. Cambon, but simply from the tendency to intrigue which has its birth in Caillaux's incessant activity—in that inability ever to wait and let things take their course, which has perhaps been more fatal to him than has anything else.

But in all that it is impossible to see anything except a certain lack of correction, and a procedure which might have been dangerous. In the result no harm was done. At the conclusion of the negotiations M. Cambon was able to felicitate M. Caillaux upon what he had accomplished in terms which were not merely those of perfunctory politeness. More than that, when Caillaux was on trial after the war the matter of his conduct at this period was referred to by the prosecution. M. Jules Cambon was called as a witness. He had nothing to say or allege against M. Caillaux.

So much for Agadir.

In 1913 came the tragedy which interrupted M. Caillaux's political career; and it was only a few days after Madame

Caillaux's acquittal in 1914 that Germany declared war.

To understand Caillaux's conduct during that period it is necessary to consider his character and temperament.

Joseph Caillaux is a man of marked capacity, untiring energy, and great resolution. He is self-reliant and overbearing, intellectually and otherwise. Against that it must be put that he possesses both physical and moral courage in a degree somewhat above the average. He is in no sense what the French call "sympathique." Although not an orator of the calibre of Briand or Viviani, he may be called almost a great speaker. But even then his voice, with its metallic tinge, his bearing, which suggests the arrogance of his nature, and his somewhat awkward, though always vigorous, gestures are all against him: the first impression is unfavourable, and one is only won over by a certain lucidity of expression and a compactness in argument which are none too common amongst French politicians. He is often described as "fastueux," but as a matter of fact he lives very simply at Mamers; and it is fair to add that he is greatly beloved in the little town where he has passed all his life. He is reputed for his financial knowledge and ability. But he is not, like the late M. Rouvier, a financier who became a politician, but a politician who, to some extent, has devoted himself to finance. I am aware that he spent a number of years in the Administration des Finances. But he gave up that career while still young, and it was only after being Minister of Finance that he became a director of various banks and companies. His general knowledge is wider in its basis than that of most of his political contemporaries. But it is not a knowledge which has grown sufficiently to influence his ideas. Indeed, his weak point intellectually is the absolute fixity of his views, which are unchanging. In that respect Briand and

Caillaux are the two extremes. The one idle by nature, though rousing himself to bursts of energy; open to all ideas, and subtle to the last degree. The other hard working and industrious, but unaffected by anything outside except in so far as it can be used in support of his acquired opinions. Caillaux lacks judgment—and perhaps the politician who said that he lacked "bon sens" was right. He has the unfortunate faculty either of surrounding himself with or allowing himself to be made the centre of people who range from plain undesirables to dangerous adventurers. This arises partly from his restlessness, and partly from the fact that he is a man of few friendships; for Caillaux, any tool is better than no tool, and his choice of tools is never very great.

He is ambitious, and has an absolutely sincere belief in his own capacities. His greatest defect—or, at least, the defect which has proved most fatal to him—is his absolute incapacity at any given moment to bide his time, to let things take their course. This curse leads him into unnecessary intrigue when things are going well; and into useless and futile struggles when the tide is against him. He is neither a great man, nor has he many of the elements which go to make a great man; but one who, within certain limits, has abilities of a high order, which he can drive with a vigour which is quite extraordinary.

One of his fixed ideas is his conception about England and the British Empire. To some extent he belongs to the school of Rouvier. The latter, when, as Président du Conseil in 1905, he forced M. Delcassé to leave the Quai d'Orsay at the behest of Germany, said: "Une alliance Franco-Anglaise serait la guerre et la défaite. Ma main sécherait plutôt que de signer pareille alliance." Caillaux's opinions about the exact value of a close alliance with England are not the outcome of any hostile feeling.

On the contrary, he has a certain respect and regard for British institutions. But he held (and still holds) the view that the Greater Britain has passed the apex of its greatest power and prosperity; that Ireland is a problem which will never be solved; and that India will lead the way towards a general dissolution of the Empire.

If Caillaux had been well-advised he would from the outset of the war have either stayed at the Front or remained quietly at Mamers. Had he followed that course, had he discreetly held himself apart from any participation in political life, and also sedulously avoided all incidents which would turn public attention in his direction, it is more than likely that he would have at least formed part of some Cabinet. But to expect that he would or could have adopted such an attitude is to misconceive his very nature. He could not bear to see great events taking place in the world in which he had for years been one of the masters, and where he was now relegated to what almost amounted to exile. He could bear it all the less because he thought that those in power were doing ill what he could do well. For instance, in a private conversation in December, 1914, he remarked that he could not understand why the Government was not then issuing a great National Loan; that with France to some extent delivered by the Battle of the Marne, there was a chance to do that successfully which might not occur again if the war was prolonged; and that the money thus obtained would be cheaper than what the Government would be obliged to get abroad in the event of the war lasting two or three years longer. His feverish restlessness would not permit of inaction. His audacity led him into indiscretions of which his lack of judgment did not allow him to realise the full enormity.

At the beginning of the war Caillaux became a Paymaster

with the Army. While at the Front he is said (rightly or wrongly) to have come into violent collision with several officers, some of whom were English. Probably the Government was only too glad to send him far away on a commercial mission to Brazil and the Argentine. There he met by chance a young man, Minotto, employed by the Guaranty Trust Company of New York, but who apparently was of German extraction. Caillaux seems to have talked with some freedom to Minotto, who reported the conversations to the German Ambassador at Buenos Ayres. After his return to France he was approached upon several occasions by people who were acting at the instigation of Germany. It is clear that Caillaux would have nothing to do with them—and that he told them plainly to leave him alone. It is not clear that he told the Government of these overtures. Caillaux affirmed that he had communicated the facts to M. Briand, which the latter denied.

Later, in December, 1916, he went to Italy to join Madame Caillaux. The evidence shows that in the ordinary course he had conversations in Rome with various Italians (and therefore subjects of an allied country); and notably that in talking to Signor Martini he expressed doubts whether France could win the war if the next offensive failed; and said that it would then be necessary to make peace, even if only part of Lorraine was obtained; although she would not be expected to give back the German colonies.

I must confess that, out of sympathy as I am and always have been with Caillaux's policy, I yet cannot see anything unpatriotic in such conduct. If he had made any propaganda it would appear in a very different light. But these views were communicated to a politician with whom he was exchanging views in the course of a private conversation. I can only compare it to a remark

made to me at about the same time by a member of the British Government. We had been discussing the same question—the sole question of those days—the war: and in answer to something I said this personage replied: “That is all very well, but you see only the French side. I hope I may be wrong, but I don’t think we will be able to wrest Alsace-Lorraine from Germany, and we can’t, as you suggest, be expected to go on fighting for the impossible only to please France.”

That was the perfectly sincere opinion of a patriotic man—expressed in a conversation after luncheon with one whom he knew to be strongly in favour of the French claims. I find it difficult to draw a distinction between that and Caillaux’s words to Signor Martini.

But if there is any doubt about Caillaux’s wrong-headed policy being inspired by what he firmly believed was for the good of his country it would, I think, be dispelled by a consideration of what was found in the safe at Florence—that famous safe which disappointed so many expectations. This document gave the outline of what Caillaux proposed to do if and when he came into power. It presaged the making of peace after the Government was formed: that is, a Caillaux Government would come into being because the country wanted a Caillaux policy; while the following passage is significant: “Dans quelques conditions qui se fasse la paix—après victoire obtenue par le nouveau Gouvernement, ou que le Gouvernement soit formé pour la conclure—ne rien faire, ne rien conclure, sans un mandat spécial du pays.”

A man who drafts a plan in the expectation of being called to office, and who lays stress on his intention not to conclude any peace or to take any definite step without a special mandate can

hardly be called a potential dictator; still less a traitor.

Equally indicative are the names of those whom the memorandum mentions as possible collaborators—a curious medley, of whom I cite only a few: Jean Dupuy; Pichon (the faithful shadow of Clemenceau); Charles Humbert; Longuet, the Socialist; Malvy,[64] after whose name Caillaux himself added an interrogation point; and Franklin-Bouillon.

While as ambassadors Caillaux thought of Briand; Barthou; Painlevé; Leygues, whom he intended to send to Italy; and Doumergue.

There is in fact nothing extraordinary about the whole document. Caillaux thought that by the course of events he would probably be brought into office (the memorandum itself mentions M. Caillaux as Président du Conseil, thus fixing his rôle) and he considered in advance what he would do when that day came.

This is absolutely in keeping with Caillaux's conversation with Signor Martini when he said that he did not expect the Briand Ministry to last long; and that afterwards it would be a question whether he or Clemenceau would form a Cabinet (M. Barthou being out of the running on account of his supposed clericalism). Caillaux added that there might possibly be a Painlevé Government in between; but that the Président du Conseil who followed, whether it was Clemenceau or himself, would stay in office until the end of the war.

In some respects it was impossible to foresee events more clearly. Ribot succeeded Briand; and Painlevé followed Ribot. Indeed, when the latter resigned, he tried to reorganise his Cabinet, but failed because Painlevé refused to remain, stating

that he did not believe that a stable Government could be constituted without the aid of the Socialists. But when Ribot thereupon abandoned the attempt Painlevé himself formed a Ministry in which there were no Socialists. Painlevé's subsequent explanation of this apparent contradiction was that otherwise Poincaré would have sent for Clemenceau: which perhaps may not seem to everyone a sufficient reason for the inconsistency. As a matter of fact Poincaré had warned Painlevé that if he refused the task he would be obliged to entrust it either to Clemenceau or to Caillaux; and that he did not intend to send for Caillaux except as a last resort.

Clemenceau did follow Painlevé and did remain in office until the conclusion of the war.

Despite this account of Poincaré's conversation with Painlevé (which has already been published, and so far as I am aware has not been denied) I doubt if he would have called Caillaux to the Eylsée had both Painlevé and Clemenceau refused or been unable to form a Government.

But I admit that the President of the Republic might have been obliged to summon Caillaux if it appeared that the war was lost: and I am not prepared to say that the war would have been won without the assistance of the United States, upon which neither Caillaux nor anyone else could rely at the date of his conversation.

But it would have been more interesting had Caillaux gone one step further in disclosing his vision of the future, if he had told Signor Martini how he thought Clemenceau would treat him if he should become Prime Minister, and how he proposed to act towards Clemenceau should he come into office himself. Caillaux was as well aware as anyone, and better than most

people, that Clemenceau never played gently. He must have known what to expect. I stated publicly myself that I thought it probable that Clemenceau would order Caillaux's arrest, and I was only stating what many thought.

The fact is that it had come down to a clash, not between two men, but between two policies; and it being war time one or the other had to be suppressed. Had Caillaux been called to power it would have been his duty to stop the publication of *L'Homme Libre*, or *L'Homme Enchainé*, as I think it was called at this period, and to have silenced Clemenceau. I do not doubt that he would have done so.

Possibly the methods adopted by Clemenceau were somewhat rough, but I am unable to imagine why anyone should have expected him to act otherwise. Moreover, it is difficult to see what else could have been done with Caillaux—an audacious and turbulent man of great ability, who had some following in the country. An eminent French statesman who might very possibly have had to deal with the situation told me that he had had a solution ready—he had meant to send Caillaux to Madeira. But my imagination does not allow me to see Caillaux—without a trial and condemnation—going into exile.

On the other hand, it would have been both wiser and more courageous simply to have suppressed Caillaux for the period of the war without sowing far and wide the statement that he was a traitor—a statement which, when the time came, it was impossible to prove. I will finish this part of the story briefly. The accusation formulated against Caillaux at his trial was based upon Articles 78 and 79 of the Penal Code, which relate to the crimes of relations with the enemy and attempts against the security of the State. Upon these he was acquitted by a

majority of the High Court (in other words, the Senate sitting as a special tribunal). But the Court then decided to apply to his case Article 77, which refers to "correspondence with the subjects of an enemy without having the object of establishing relations with the enemy or of assailing the security of the State."

Upon this count Caillaux was convicted and sentenced, the "correspondence" being his conversations with Minotto in South America, though it is fair to add that apparently Caillaux had no reason to think that Minotto was in any way German.

I have set forth at length the gist of Caillaux's trial solely for one reason—to make it clear that he was not convicted of any crime which makes his return to power an absolute impossibility. It is true that his interdiction does not expire until after the expiration of the present Parliament. Therefore, barring a pardon or remission by the President, he will be unable to be a candidate at the next General Election. Upon the whole I think the chances are against his again being Prime Minister, and none the less so because Briand's enmity stands in the way. Only a few months ago (December 23rd, 1920) Briand wrote to the *Figaro* protesting against his name having been coupled with that of M. Caillaux, adding: "It is, I repeat, a gross calumny, the stupidity of which must be immediately apparent to all those who have been in political life for the last fifteen years, and who cannot be ignorant of the fact that M. Caillaux and myself have always been irreconcilable opponents."

But if France goes from bad to worse financially the country might turn to Caillaux. Even his enemies admit or exaggerate his financial genius. Still more so might he seem the saviour if the Treaty of Versailles proved to be a broken reed—if no money

was obtained from Germany—if Caillaux's warning that England would protect herself and leave France in the lurch should turn out to be true. In that event Caillaux might again be Président du Conseil; for which he would have to render some thanks to Mr. Lloyd George, in whose hands his future now possibly rests.

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. Lloyd George and Party Politics

Even Mr. Lloyd George's opponents will admit that his portrait, as recently drawn by the unknown "Gentleman with a Duster," does not err on the side of generosity. The Prime Minister's anonymous critic names many defects, the existence of some of which is sufficiently patent to all, and of others is questionable. But where the picture is false is in its lack of lights and shades. It is "tout d'une pièce." No mention is made of the qualities which enabled Mr. Lloyd George, more than any other politician, to save his country from the threatened domination of Germany. The author of "The Mirrors of Downing Street" is not alone in regretting that the man who was able to do that was not one to delight in the company of Mr. Edmund Gosse rather than in that of Lord Riddell: that he has neither the historic name of Lord Lansdowne nor the scholarship of Lord Morley: that he lacks the suavity of Mr. Balfour and the dignity of Mr. Asquith. The regret is comprehensible. But what is less clear is the omission to bring out that it was this man of another type and of a different fibre who alone was capable of rousing the mass of his fellow-countrymen to make the requisite effort at the most critical moments.[65]

For it was only Mr. Lloyd George amongst English politicians who could inspire or excite any enthusiasm.

Moreover, he was (with one exception) the only English parliamentarian who made any marked impression upon the

political leaders of Allied countries. That did not arise from the fact that he was Prime Minister. It was a judgment formed in the earlier days of the war. In the summer of 1916 I happened to be having a conversation with a French statesman when a news agency despatch was brought to him repeating a London rumour that Mr. Asquith contemplated resigning on account of the trouble which had grown out of the Easter rebellion in Ireland. The discussion which ensued as to the likelihood of this being a fact was ended by my French friend shrugging his shoulders and remarking: "Ça ne fait rien, pourvu que M. Lloyd George y reste." French lack of appreciation of Mr. Asquith's qualities was always remarkable.

Not only were Lloyd George's abilities appreciated by the French, but upon the whole his chameleon-like traits tended towards useful co-operation. He was able to impress his personality upon the various French politicians who were Présidents du Conseil in the course of the war; and to establish workable relations with all of them—differing in character and in temperament as they did the one from the other.

Briand is to some extent a man of his own type, with the saving grace of being more detached in his personal interests and fairer in his judgment. Briand rated Lloyd George's qualities and defects at their proper value. He did not exaggerate either the one or the other; nor did he take his outbursts too seriously. Ribot is by nature cold and suspicious. From the outset he distrusted Lloyd George. It must be admitted that eventually the facts bore out his instinct. Painlevé was probably on closer personal terms than were any of his predecessors with the British Prime Minister. The latter admired the limpid honesty of Painlevé's nature; and was not oblivious to the fact that he himself was the stronger character.

It would be difficult to find two men less appreciative of each other's good points than were Clemenceau and Lloyd George. At least each was more prone to think of the other's defects than of his qualities. Clemenceau is essentially what the French call a mauvais coucheur. He is hard, often rough, satirical to the point of being cruel, and few men can work with him unless they entirely accept his ascendency—as did the faithful Pichon. But there is nothing small about him. His courage, moral as well as physical, is perhaps his outstanding characteristic. He is absolutely veracious, not only because he would think it cowardly to be otherwise, but also because his pleasure is to get his own way by pluck and audacity. He holds sentimentalism in horror. But he himself is by no means devoid of true sentiment. Those who can remember the way he used to look at the poilus at the Front will know that. But any feelings of Clemenceau's which come to the surface are sincere and abiding.

Unfortunately he recoiled from the fact that Lloyd George's cleverness was based upon a certain mental agility rather than upon a foundation of conviction. He sometimes doubted his word. He always distrusted his courage.[66] While the Welshman's vanity, as shown by his sensitiveness to criticism, was a source of much mocking comment.

Upon the other hand Lloyd George chafed under Clemenceau's varying attitude, which, according to his mood, ranged from pleasantness to raillery. He professed to make allowance for him on account of his age. I recollect his telling me that Clemenceau objected to his seeing, when in Paris, any of the other French politicians with whom he had formerly acted during the war; and that, in order not to irritate an old man, he had agreed not to do so; making, however, an exception of

Albert Thomas.

For Thomas was the one of all others with whom Lloyd George was most at his ease. I think it was the fact that Thomas took Claridge's Hotel in Paris (which had just been finished in 1914) as the Ministry of Munitions, which led Lloyd George to begin his commandeering of London hotels. In any event when Thomas was a member of the Ribot Cabinet, and in Russia on a mission, it was said that he maintained a correspondence or private communications with Lloyd George; and that his advice was not always in keeping with Ribot's views or policy. The intermediary was reputed to be M. Mantoux, a Frenchman who before 1914 was a professor at London University; and who later rendered valuable services as an interpreter (he was one of rare excellence) at the Allies' meetings and subsequently at the Peace Conference. His reward, like that of Albert Thomas, was a post in the League of Nations organisation.[67] Mantoux was originally not an adherent of Clemenceau's. The only time I ever heard him discuss the situation was soon after the latter became Prime Minister; when he predicted to me that Clemenceau would not be in office for three months. I imagine that the latter knew Mantoux's views and took an opportunity to warn him to reserve his political conversation to interpreting the words of others. For when some time afterwards I related this conversation to Henry Wilson he remarked that that gave him the clue to a certain incident: that at one English-French meeting Clemenceau absolutely refused to have Mantoux as interpreter; but had allowed him to act at the next one, apparently thinking that one lesson had sufficed.

During the war, and in their considered reflections since, French hommes d'état have, for the greater part, been unanimous in thinking that the only two first-rate statesmen we had (first-

rate in very different ways) were Lloyd George and Lord Milner. Winston Churchill often excited interest and sometimes a fugitive admiration: but he was not a possession which they envied us. Sir Edward Carson aroused curiosity. But he was and always remained a mystery. During the Peace Conference Lord Robert Cecil earned great respect, though he was generally thought to be a dangerous fanatic on some subjects. Mr Balfour was accepted as a personality—more than that—as a charmeur; but a diplomat who had known his uncle and knew his cousin once said to me: "Underneath the surface Mr. Balfour is mainly negative: and I can give you a negative comparison of him. He is a Cecil—with all the cynicism of Lord Salisbury, and with all his contempt of what is not of his world, but entirely without Lord Salisbury's firm determination to fight a losing battle to the end; while on the other hand he has none of the generous but misplaced enthusiasm of Lord Robert."

At the Peace Conference Mr. Lloyd George again did good work for his country. This required high efficiency in the exercise of a certain talent, political juggling: a talent which Mr. Lloyd George possesses in an exceptional degree. The rights or the wrongs of the Treaty do not enter into this account. All conferences of the conquerors in a great war show the more despicable side of human nature. Those who have been sworn allies in the face of a common foe invariably have disagreements more or less deep when the work of the soldier is finished and the politicians begin to apportion the spoil. More often than not the extent of the discord is limited only to the need which the victors think they will have of each other's support and assistance in the future.

The Congress of Vienna has long been the classic instance. In history its place will now doubtless be taken by the Paris

Conference—with all its intrigues, and its manifold signs of meanness; its hypocrisies: the promise that there should no longer be any secret diplomacy—when nothing was ever more secret; the pretence that small nations would get the same hearing as great nations, when sometimes they were not really heard at all, and more often they were given to understand that their interests could not be considered. But throughout this proof that human nature had not changed Mr. Lloyd George did his duty in seeing that this country obtained what she needed or wanted.

While no one can add much to the delightful third chapter of Mr. Keynes's regrettable book, it is perhaps permissible to draw this distinction: Mr Lloyd George often got the better of Mr. Wilson and sometimes of M. Clemenceau. But in the former instance Wilson either did not realise it or awoke to the fact too late; while Clemenceau always knew it, and when he had to bow to it, did so, sardonically, as part of the game.

It is undeniable that Lloyd George never consistently took a firm stand upon any higher ground than the interests of his own country. While sometimes he did not convince his colleagues that he was even drawing a definite dividing line between those national interests and his desire to assure his own political future. In matters which did not directly affect Great Britain he generally took little or no interest. But such subjects as the punishment of German war criminals, and, above all, of the former Kaiser, always elicited from the Prime Minister a support which he was far from giving to the claims of the smaller nations. He was at no pains to conceal that he was thus forging electoral weapons. Nevertheless, one of the few amusing consequences of the Peace Conference is the unending astonishment of French statesmen about Mr. Lloyd George's

conduct on this subject. For their own part they then cared comparatively little about the question of punishment. At best it was to them a secondary matter. What they naturally wanted was some security for the future and some reparation, in money, for the past. But in order to conciliate Lloyd George on these points they seconded his every effort on what he seemed to have so much at heart—and even made the demand their own. His subsequent indifference at first amazed and then amused his former French colleagues.

But it ill behoves any Englishman to complain that Lloyd George thought too much of the interests of his country.

Still less is the Prime Minister open to any serious reproach upon the ground that he did not attempt to regenerate the human race. He had the great good sense to limit his efforts to achieving what was feasible. The short space of two years has shown that the one of the Four who had ideas of another nature is the person responsible for the state of Europe to-day. M. Alfred Capus has written (and with reason) that Wilson's greatest fault consisted in imagining that the war which had destroyed ten million men had, at the same time, made the human race perfect, whereas in fact it had only diminished its numbers. While he justly blames the American President for having sacrificed the present generation to his own personal satisfaction, with having, in his exaltation, forgotten that there still existed Americans, English, Germans, and French, and that the differences and antagonisms of races could not be made to disappear by a flourish of his magic wand. "Des enfants de Japet, toujours une moitié fournira des armes à l'autre."

After the General Election of 1918 some of Mr. Lloyd George's friends launched the genial idea that, for his own sake,

he ought to retire, and thus be free to come back as a saviour when others had bungled and had disappeared. It was, I think, the newspaper of which Lord Astor is the principal proprietor and Mr. J. L. Garvin the oracle which directed public attention to this odd notion. Certainly the task with which Lloyd George was faced was not a grateful one. While in some respects it did not suit his genius as well as manœuvring in Paris. But apart from the fact that there was no one else able to assume the burden, and that it would have been cowardly to refuse it, what would Mr. Lloyd George have done had he voluntarily left 10, Downing Street and abandoned politics? I always wondered what kind of a life Lord Astor and Mr. Garvin had planned for him. Mr. Lloyd George is hardly like Sulla, who, having exterminated his enemies because he had to do so in order to avoid being exterminated himself, was delighted to turn aside from the political world, and to give himself up to the pleasures which very soon killed him. Nor could the last experiment of the kind in England be taken as an encouraging example. That was when Mr. Gladstone, after the defeat of his party, decided in 1884 that, at the age of sixty-five, he could fitly retire from public life. Apart from the weight of his years, Mr. Gladstone at least had the semblance of other pursuits to which he could devote himself—the writing of theological tracts, the translation of the classics. In that he had the advantage of Mr. Lloyd George, whom one can only imagine perpetually playing golf on Walton Heath and discussing the mistakes of his successors. But even Mr. Gladstone could not stand aside when power was within his grasp; and although after the next election the Queen sent for Lord Hartington, Mr. Gladstone promptly bundled him out of the way, and again took control.

Mr. Lloyd George's friends went a step further since they

announced openly that the plan was to resurrect him at an opportune moment. The Prime Minister would certainly have found it somewhat difficult to get a locum tenens in the leadership of a party. Doubtless he himself never gave any heed to this mad scheme.

Mr. Asquith's idea was simple, if nothing else. He protested with vehemence, and even with bitterness, that the game was not being played fairly: that it had always been understood that the Coalition should be for the duration of the war only: that therefore it should cease automatically upon the conclusion of peace, and all politicians should return to their pre-war allegiance. The argument is curiously like that of Von Klück, who has written complaining that had his opponent only observed the rules Germany would have won the war in 1914. According to the German general it was an accepted military tradition that the garrison of an armed camp should not leave it except to repel an attack, which Galliéni had unfairly ignored in assailing his flank while he was skirting around Paris. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ.*

Mr. Asquith apparently thought that parties were immutable, and that party ties were as sacred as a priest's vow of celibacy. There were many who had likened Asquith to the younger Pitt as described in a notable passage of Macaulay—a great Prime Minister in time of peace, but incompetent as a War Minister; and had looked for his triumphant return to office soon after the struggle. But this pronouncement convinced the country at large that Mr. Asquith was hopelessly out of touch with the changing times. Bourbon-like, he had learned nothing and had forgotten nothing. The end of the war found him with exactly the same mental vision as he had in 1914. The interlude had only meant his exile from Downing Street. But now he seriously proposed

that everyone should put themselves back to 1914 and should resume the old fight side by side with those who had opposed them for more than four years, as if nothing had happened in the interval. He was unable to realise that opponents who had found a common ground which permitted them to work together during the war might in good faith find a common ground which would enable them to continue to work together in times to which the years before 1914 afforded no analogy. He may have thought it extraordinary that Lloyd George and Mr. Walter Long could continue to sit together on the same Front Bench. But he forgot that after all that had happened it would, for instance, have been even more extraordinary and much more inconsistent to find Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Pringle in the same party. Mr. Asquith on this occasion went out of his way to prove that his political claims rested entirely upon his ability as a parliamentarian.

Mr. Lloyd George may have been amused by Mr. Asquith's proposal, but it is safe to say that it appealed to him even less than the idea that he himself should play the part of the Master of Ballantrae with Lord Astor as Secundra.

Mr. Lloyd George began by having a General Election. It was the proper course to take. Had he not done so, had he allowed Parliament in time of peace to continue to give itself new leases of life in defiance of the law, he would have weakened his own authority and Great Britain's position at the Conference. It might even have been held—it would certainly have been alleged—that he did not represent the opinion of his country—while he might later have been obliged to fight a General Election with the Treaty of Peace in suspense—and might possibly have been repudiated as was Woodrow Wilson; thus bringing to naught the work of months. In the actual result Mr. Lloyd George got a mandate which he executed. The Treaty

of Versailles may not contain all that he promised during his campaign, but in the main it embodies what was guaranteed to the electors.

Undoubtedly it accorded with Lloyd George's personal interest to have an election in December, 1918. But the suggestion that he should have waited until an unfavourable moment—until a moment that suited his opponents—sounds rather strange on the lips of Mr. Asquith and his supporters.

The General Election sent to Westminster a House of Commons whom Mr. Keynes has described as "a set of hard faced men who looked as if they had done very well out of the war." From that one would be inclined to imagine that they were disciples of the *Daily News*, which, on the very eve of the war, urged, with all the vigour which Mr. A. G. Gardiner could command, that the proper course was for Great Britain to stand aside and to make money out of those who would be bleeding to death. But, in fact, the views of Mr. Gardiner, either those he held in 1914 or those he holds to-day, find little echo in the present Parliament. It is said that it is a House of Commons which does not represent the country. The truth is that, just as it would have been an unrepresentative House in 1914, so it is a House which would doubtless be unrepresentative in 1925. But, like the French Chambre des Députés, it is quite representative of its period—of the transitional stage through which we are passing.

Mr. Lloyd George thus gained time to consider the situation and to see what bargain he could make.

To the credit of his account he could put the fact that the political party which was most united (though it certainly was not united on any fixed principles), which had most members in

the House of Commons, and the best organisation in the country, was to all intents and purposes in search of a leader; while he was undoubtedly the one leader whom, as a matter of practical politics, any party would most covet. It was evident that, although Mr. Bonar Law might be a brilliant second and a great leader of the House of Commons, he had neither the temperament nor the ambition to go further. Mr. Bonar Law has a nature which inclines him to attach himself to some stronger personality: and his loyalty is so sure and impeccable that that attachment is a precious and invaluable support to any Prime Minister. At one time his devotion seemed to be turned in the direction of Mr. Asquith, who, however, made nothing of it. Lloyd George, on the contrary, has, since December, 1916, nurtured it; so that when Bonar Law retired he was fairly counted as Lloyd George's man.

Not only has the Prime Minister few competitors as a party leader, but there are only two people of whose opposition he has any great fear.

For Mr. Winston Churchill's power to be unpleasantly pugnacious he has a wholesome respect. Churchill has all the moral courage which Lloyd George lacks; but none of his tact in negotiation, none of his caution in acting. In the excitement of speaking Mr. Lloyd George sometimes says things which he has reason to regret. But he rarely moves precipitately. No one is more careful not to do anything which is unpopular; and presumably to follow public opinion is good politics although it may not be high principles. But Winston Churchill, to whom public applause is not the breath of life (luckily for him, since throughout his career he has been a target for attacks), is restrained by no such consideration. He acts impetuously, and in the face of opposition maintains his position, often with more

pluck than circumspection.

He holds (and has held for many years past) one record of which the late Lady Randolph Churchill was wont to boast with justifiable maternal pride. He has been in office for more years than any man of his age in our political history, always barring the younger Pitt.

It is curious to reflect that small events may change the whole political history of a country. In 1902 both Bonar Law and Winston Churchill were possibilities for the post of Parliamentary Secretary of the Board of Trade. Churchill wanted it and thought that it was his due. Mr. Balfour gave it to Bonar Law. It was that, more than anything else, which led Churchill to cross the floor of the House. It convinced him that he would find no future in the Conservative fold. Party ties mean little to Churchill. He sincerely believes that the country has need of his services, and does not intend that it shall be deprived of them. He is first and foremost a great Winstonian. Other things being equal, his authoritative temperament inclines him naturally to Toryism; just as, on the other hand, Mr. Lloyd George, were the choice open to him, would rather be in power supported by the party which makes the most direct appeal to popular feeling.

During Churchill's temporary political eclipse he served for some time with his regiment in France. But on his return he allowed Lloyd George to see both, I believe, by the line he took at a secret session of the House, as well as otherwise, that the choice was between a friendly colleague and a parliamentary opponent of a very different metal from Asquith. The Prime Minister capitulated, and Churchill came back to office. He will never be in opposition to Lloyd George if the latter is able to

prevent it. Probably the only contingency is the remote prospect that Churchill may one day lead a party.

The other person upon whom, for very different reasons, Mr. Lloyd George keeps a watchful eye is Lord Derby. The latter has neither the pugnacity nor the force of Churchill, who once upon a time was his own *bête noir*. But he has exactly what the other lacks, a following in the country. His work in recruiting during the war will always stand to his credit. It was not his fault if those who came in under the Derby scheme later possibly had some well-founded grievances. At the War Office he was known as a firm supporter of General Robertson in the conflict of which that distinguished soldier was the centre. When Robertson was succeeded by Henry Wilson it was thought that Lord Derby would at once resign. But it was only some time later that he left Whitehall to succeed the late Lord Bertie in Paris.

The appointment was one which caused widespread surprise and interest. Obviously, if there was no diplomat suitable and available for the post (and Sir Rennel Rodd, who had some claim to it, could not be spared from Rome), it ought to have been given to a great peer. Lord Derby, of course, had that qualification in an eminent degree: and his acceptance was a death-blow to intrigues which might possibly have led to one or other of several unworthy nominations. But he was so little known in connection with foreign affairs that in some quarters there was doubt as to the result.

I recollect asking the French Ambassador, M. Paul Cambon, at luncheon a few days after the appointment was announced if he knew whether Lord Derby spoke French, the current rumour being that he did not. “Oui,” replied the Ambassador, with a

characteristic movement, “Oui, il parle français comme je parle anglais.” As nobody, to my knowledge, has ever heard M. Cambon speak English, the certificate was, and was doubtless meant to be, rather enigmatic.

But if opinions were divided before Lord Derby went, there was perfect unanimity long before he returned. His success was immediate and complete. The French confidence in him was unlimited; and even during the unpleasant and critical days which followed the Frankfort incident that confidence was unbroken and his popularity amongst all classes remained undiminished. Lord Bertie was a man of great attainments who jealously guarded the interests of his country. He was respected and feared: but he neither was, nor apparently did he want to be, liked. Lord Derby awakened very different feelings. In Paris his name is and long will be linked with those of the only two other English ambassadors who left behind them any abiding memory —Lord Lytton and, to a somewhat less extent, Lord Dufferin.

To be a peer is to-day a handicap in the political world. Some thirty odd years ago three comparatively young men—George Curzon, St. John Brodrick, and the then Lord Wolmer—realized that fact and cast about for a way in which they might avoid the soporific House of Lords. They were advised (by Lord James of Hereford, I think) to consult a lawyer who could help them if anyone could—H. Asquith. However, even Mr. Asquith’s ingenuity was not equal to that task. It is apparently destined to be Mr. Lloyd George who will afford some relief to unwilling peers.

But if Lord Derby has that handicap, it is, in his case, not without some compensating advantage. He is a peer with territorial influence; one of the last of them, and probably

possessed of more influence of that kind than any two other peers in England. In Lancashire he is a power: and Lancashire is a power in England.

Of still greater importance is the almost universal belief, at home as well as abroad, that Lord Derby typifies in a supreme degree the English character, with its great qualities and its traditional limitations. The country may admire Mr. Lloyd George's extreme cleverness, but it does not altogether trust it. To the ordinary English mind he seems just a little too clever. In brief, his ability is useful to him for what it enables him to achieve more than for the confidence it inspires: for in a referendum on the latter point he would fall far behind Lord Derby.

It was a foregone conclusion that Mr. Lloyd George would offer Lord Derby a place in the Cabinet when he returned to England. What was not so certain was the course which Lord Derby himself would take. He chose the middle, and, in the circumstances, the sensible one. He declined the Prime Minister's overtures. But at the same time he gave no encouragement to those who, partly for their own purpose, tried to force him into leading some movement against the Government.

He admits himself that he is credited with once having had two ambitions—to be Prime Minister and to win the Derby: and adds that only one of the two remains with him to-day. Lord Derby is still racing; and I trust that he may yet be successful. It is less likely that he will ever be Prime Minister. But he will always be a certain power, he can hold high office whenever he likes: and Mr. Lloyd George is displaying his habitual cautious wisdom in not neglecting him.

On the Conservative side there is hardly anyone else to whom the Prime Minister need pay much attention. Lord Robert Cecil may become a nuisance. He is much less likely ever to be a rival. He is in one respect the Mr. Dick of politics: the Church, like King Charles's head, may be brought into any question. Such a weakness puts him at a marked disadvantage as an opponent of opportunists.

As Lord Chancellor Lord Birkenhead has had a success, both on the Woolsack and in the debates in the Lords, which has entirely delighted and somewhat surprised the whole political world. It is well known that he has no intention of being restrained by any traditions as to what former Lord Chancellors should or should not do. In this respect his ideas correspond with those held by Brougham,[68] whom he equals in brilliancy (although not so versatile) and excels in sanity. Lord Birkenhead will doubtless yet fill various offices. But it is not impossible that the former hope of the Tory party may one day lead it or its successor.

Austen Chamberlain's present position does not seem to be quite clear. He leads in the House of Commons, but can hardly be considered the actual or definite leader of the party in the country. The fact that Lord Derby is pointing to Lloyd George as the logical leader of the Conservative party is indicative of the situation in which Chamberlain is placed.

Amongst the new men there is only one of pronounced promise. Sir Robert Horne has achieved a great position in a short time. He is certainly more of a Tory than was ever Mr. Bonar Law: whether that is an advantage or otherwise is another question. That he will go far is likely: but at the present day he is not a possible leader.

In any event the Conservative party is in a condition of flux, if not actually in process of dissolution. The word "Unionist" has now ceased to have any application. The word "Conservative" has little more, except in so far as it may indicate the less extreme party in the State.

Disraeli seems to have seen plainly enough what was coming, and to have found the only way for his party to keep even with the times without being submerged. The Tory Democracy of Lord Randolph Churchill, though somewhat crude, was entirely in keeping with Disraelism. But Lord Salisbury took a different stand. M. Paul Cambon once told me that Lord Salisbury always gave him the impression of a man who went on knowing that he was fighting a losing fight, but with no intention of yielding to the trend of the period. That was not Disraelism. But it is reminiscent of Bismarck's reputed comment at the Berlin Conference: "Lord Salisbury is a lath painted to look like iron, but the old Jew means business."

To Lord Salisbury succeeded Mr. Balfour, who completed the ruin of his party. He made no effort either to keep the votes of one class or to get those of the other. He went back to country-house Toryism—a pleasant enough life, but not one calculated to win seats in Parliament. Had the Conservative party had another leader the progress of the Labour party would have been less rapid. But Mr. Balfour lost what used to be called the working-class vote (the basis of Tory strength once the franchise was extended) without doing anything to get the middle-class support which Gladstone had firmly riveted to the Liberal cause. Finally, he was guilty of the tactical error of refusing to go to the country when it was evident that his Government was discredited.

By common consent Mr. Balfour has great charm of manner. But his detachment is something hardly human. I have heard him, at a critical period of the war, and while he was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, discuss after dinner the prospects, the chances of our ultimately winning or losing, with the interest of a person observing a great phenomenon which in no way affected him personally: the interest one might have expected to be displayed by a week-end visitor from Mars.

At the time Lord Queenborough went to the House of Lords someone who was staying at a country house where Mr. Balfour was also of the party mentioned the coming by-election in Cambridge, and Mr. Balfour asked how there was a vacancy. "What has become of Almeric?" he queried. And, when told, said that he was unaware that Mr. Paget had gone to the Upper House.

I repeated this to the late Lady X., who to her last day maintained her lifelong interest both in politics and in racing. She said that she had never been able to determine how much of Mr. Balfour's attitude about not knowing what was taking place in the world was pose, and how much simply a natural aversion to be bothered with such matters: and cited another instance; how, at a time when he was leader, he expressed his ignorance about a coming by-election (Peterborough, I think) of some importance. Lady X.'s own impression was that what had originally been a pose had long since become a habit.

I was therefore not surprised when a well-known Frenchwoman told me recently that on the first day that Mr. Balfour attended the Peace Conference (it was, I think, the first day of the Conference) she lunched with Mr. Balfour, Lord Robert Cecil, and others. When Mr. Balfour was obliged to

leave in order to go to the Conference she made a little *discours de circonstance*: “An interesting and memorable historic occasion,” etc. “Yes,” agreed Mr. Balfour, with something between a sigh aid a yawn, “but what a bore!”

When Mr. Balfour became impossible as leader of his party the choice fell (in circumstances to which I have already adverted) upon a man for whom the general respect has increased year by year; but who was not really a Tory, and had not in him the making of a great leader, except on the benches of the House of Commons.

Upon this showing Mr. Lloyd George’s prospects of striking a bargain more or less on his own terms might appear favourable. But against that must be put the cold fact that he has no party organisation, and not a great many followers who have moderately safe seats. A party in search of a leader is in a bad way. But a leader in search of a party is in a still worse position. Nobody knows the force of that argument better than Sir George Younger, who doubtless has more than once used it in discussions with the Prime Minister. The end will probably be that Lloyd George will go somewhat further than he would like to proceed along the path to which Younger points. But needs must. The war and the ensuing coalitions only hastened an end which was inevitable. Neither the remnants of the party nor Mr. Lloyd George will lose by the bargain. What is more important, the country will gain; for it is never in the public interest that either of the principal political parties in the State should be derelict.

Such was the position until a few months ago. But since the above was written there has been a change of atmosphere. Shortly before the Cannes Conference Mr. Lloyd George and

those close to him had practically decided to have an early general election. Sir George Younger stoutly opposed this decision. But apparently Mr. Lloyd George thought that he held the stronger cards; and that, if it came to an issue, the Unionist party would cede rather than forfeit his leadership. He therefore held firm. If there had been a party meeting (always an unsatisfactory affair) he might possibly have carried the day. But Younger kept the matter in his own hands; and, to the surprise and chagrin of Lloyd George, he accepted what almost amounted to a challenge, came into the open, and told the world that Unionists were entirely opposed to a needless general election. Probably Mr. Lloyd George never regretted so keenly that the only following which he could absolutely call his own was in the minority. In the circumstances he was forced to retreat; and he therefore did his utmost to make out that he had never had any such idea. The doughty and debonair Sir George was for the moment left in the possession of the field, smilingly asking "Who said General Election?"

Indeed, Younger went further. For in a subsequent speech he defined more clearly than had Mr. Chamberlain the independent position which, according to his conception, the Unionists occupy in the Coalition. This led Mr. Lloyd George to serve notice upon Mr. Chamberlain that he would resign unless his Unionist colleagues in the Cabinet could keep their followers in order. His letter was almost tantamount to demanding that Younger should be ousted from his post as head of the party organisation. At first sight it might seem that the Prime Minister was merely making a stand for a reasonable measure of party discipline. But it is necessary to go a little further back in order to get a true light upon the subject. What originated this trouble, and caused Sir George Younger to speak so openly? Simply Mr.

Lloyd George's temporary insistence upon a general election against the wishes of the Unionists; that is, in opposition to the views of those who are not of his own party, but who give him a majority in the House of Commons.

In reality, therefore, Mr. Lloyd George is going far beyond an appeal for party discipline. He is setting up the pretension that in the future he shall be an unquestioned dictator—as he has sometimes been in the past. Or at least he is making that the condition of his continuance in office.

At the time I am writing the outcome of this crisis rests in doubt. But it is probable that Mr. Lloyd George has no sincere desire to retire; and that it was a threat which he would fulfil with regret. Nevertheless, if he did so upon the ground that he would not submit to be ruined by the Unionists, he would have every chance of leading another—and a more Radical—party within a short time. To be at the head of such a party is what he would most prefer; if only it could be accomplished without that unpleasant and uncertain interval which would follow his departure from Downing Street!

If Mr. Lloyd George remains as Prime Minister (which is likely) it will be a question of terms between himself and the Unionist party. Should the latter yield entirely it will simply mean that it has gone into voluntary liquidation and has had a sale. Truth to tell there would not then be much left to sell. It has no great leaders. Even the *Morning Post* can only suggest that Mr. Balfour, now seventy-four years of age and in many respects out of touch with the present generation, should take Mr. Lloyd George's succession. Its principles the Unionist party long ago threw overboard. In brief its chief asset is the number of seats it holds in the present House of Commons.

Even if Mr. Lloyd George does not obtain the full assurances which he wants he will at least have divided the Unionist in the same way as he has already divided the Liberal party, although not to the same extent. He will have increased his own independence, and his own political value, while correspondingly diminishing that of a great party. It is personal politics upon a high scale.

Whatever the ultimate result, this crisis has hastened the end of the Coalition; and has exposed the weakness of Mr. Chamberlain.

But if the Conservative party is in a state of dissolution the former Liberal party is dead and all but buried. With the rise of the Labour party it was obvious that one of the pre-existing parties would sooner or later disappear. Parliamentary government originated in England; and its basis, its very essence, is that there should be two parties in the State holding contradictory opinions upon the vital issues of the day. More than two parties there have never been except when there has been a split in one of the two and the minority wing has not yet gone over or been reabsorbed—for instance, the Peelites—or when there has been a party for a single particular purpose, as was the Irish Nationalist party. The main reason why parliamentary government has not had the same success in Latin countries is attributable to an apparent inability to form and maintain parties, as distinguished from groups. It was, I think, Mr. Bodley who once aptly wrote that while the British constitution was a very excellent thing, yet, like the Blessed Sacrament, it was not to be carried around and worshipped. If either the Conservative or Radical Party had to give way to the new Labour element it was clear that it was the Radicals who would be crowded out; for there was nothing which they

proposed to do which the Labour leaders did not promise to do more thoroughly. The election of 1918, coming as it did immediately after the end of hostilities, hastened the downfall of Gladstonian Liberalism. But the result would have been the same in any event, though the final issue might otherwise have been delayed. It is significant that since then there has been a sneaking desire on the part of Radicals to come to terms with Labour. But the old Liberal party has little to offer except a money chest—a very useful and even a necessary adjunct for any campaign, but not in itself all-sufficient. The party holds few seats. It has no leaders who can arouse any interest or excite any enthusiasm. Mr. Asquith is out of touch, not only with the country, but with a House of Commons which he does not understand. Lord Grey's renewed activity will raise the tone of public life. But any chance he ever had of becoming a great leader ceased the day he rather unwillingly went to the House of Lords. Sir Donald MacLean is held in sympathetic esteem even by his opponents, but he will never be dangerous. Mr. McKenna, a man who couples real ability with the knack of making himself disliked for no deep reasons, is not very likely to leave a certainty in the world of high finance for an uncertainty in that of politics. Mr. Masterman still dreams of an alliance between Liberalism and Labour. But his is a voice crying in the wilderness. Sir Herbert Samuel (at present occupied in governing Palestine) is ambitious. But his brain does not work so quickly as that of his cousin, Montagu; nor, to do him justice, do his party and personal allegiances weigh upon him so lightly. For of all desertions to Mr. Lloyd George, that of Montagu was the least excusable. He did not, like others of his then colleagues, go over in December, 1916, when they took the risk of challenging Asquith's power. He stayed with Asquith then, and only left him later, when it was no longer a

question of men grouping together in the interest of their country to turn out an incompetent Prime Minister, but solely a question of Montagu getting into office. But the worst part of the transaction is that Montagu was Asquith's particular *protégé*. It was the Liberal Prime Minister who opened to him the road to political success, and who made him his youngest colleague. Truly Mr. Asquith, the most loyal of men, has not been over fortunate in the devotion of his followers.

The fact that Liberalism has little to offer Labour is one to which the leaders of the latter movement are fully alive. Any amalgamation is unlikely unless it is one whereby Labour swallows the remnants of the Liberal party. On the other hand, the Labour party has not had during the present Parliament the success which it anticipated. It has not produced many men of first-rate ability; but that is hardly the cause of its failure, since no other party has much to boast of in that respect. Winston Churchill's gibe that Labour is unfit to govern—unfit in the sense that it has not the administrative capacity—is absurd. A Cabinet of which no member had ever been in office before would certainly encounter many preliminary difficulties. But there are several Labour leaders who held Government office during the war. While as regards actual ability, what is to be said about the present Front Bench? Eliminate Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Winston Churchill himself, Sir Robert Horne (who was a real find), and how are the others to be ranked? Something can be said for, but also a great deal against, the administrative capacity of Mr. Chamberlain. Sir Worthington Evans as a solicitor was shrewd and capable, and will show the same qualities in any office. But Labour can produce as good as that. While if one takes the whole Front Bench, beginning with Horne as the highest type of efficiency, and finishing with the

unfortunate and incompetent Dr. Addison at the other end,[69] it will be found that the middle is certainly not above the average that any party might reasonably hope to possess.

The present trouble with the Labour party arises from the transitional stage through which all parties are now passing, and also from the fact that it increased the number of seats it held too quickly for its own good. It is unlikely that there will ever be any retrogression; on the contrary, there will almost certainly be a progressive increase for some time to come. But the lack of power of assimilation, the lack of party discipline (discipline in the proper sense), the lack of even a minor George Younger, at present deprives the party of the influence it otherwise might have. A party of which the leaders preach their loyalty to the constitution, and their faith in constitutional methods, while one of its whips makes a fool of himself by trying to insult the sovereign, struggles under a certain disadvantage.

But these are minor defects which will doubtless disappear as this new party settles down to prepare itself to take its turn of governing the country. The vital difficulty lies elsewhere. It is essential that the Labour party should appeal to the country at large. A party which merely represents trade unions will never come into power in England, for which one may be duly thankful, as that would be class government of the most pronounced kind. On the other hand, there is no possibility of increasing the number of trade unionists to anything like the requisite figure.

There are at present about 8,000,000 members of Trade Unions in Great Britain. That is not sufficient to ensure a majority in the House of Commons. A great deal of the talk about the absolute power of Labour is therefore nonsense. The

power of Labour to cause inconvenience, to lose money for workers and employers alike, temporarily to interrupt the course of ordinary life, and to do harm to the country, is almost incalculable. But that is not enough, especially in England. For some time the superior organisation of the Trade Unions enabled the Labour party to show a front which gave an exaggerated idea of its real influence if it was put to a decisive test. But as the origin of this strength was realised other interests in the State also began to organise. While the railway strike of 1919, and the more recent coal strike have demonstrated clearly that so long as there is parliamentary government the country will not allow a minority to impose its will upon a majority. Direct action on a large scale would probably solve the question quickly—to the discomfiture of Labour; and the Labour leaders, who know that quite as well as anyone else, have, for the greater part, no stomach for a policy to which many of them are sincerely opposed, and of which many more doubt the sagacity. They realise that the country will not be bullied, and that any party in England which to-day openly says that a minority is to govern is simply slamming in its own face the door to office. The extremists will never admit that. But the recent strikes—and failures—have had their effect in convincing the rank and file that success does not lie that way. The only remaining course is to rest on the field of constitutional government and to augment their forces. To achieve the latter end they will be obliged to do what every other fresh party has done before it came into power—to compromise. If they do so now, before it is too late, while the country is not satisfied with a one party power, and before anything else arises on the ashes of the Liberal pyre, they have every chance of forming the basis of one of the two great parties.

The Labour leaders are therefore confronted with the problem of some way securing a large proportion of that middle-class vote which Gladstone always had behind him, and which stuck to the Liberal party until the War. That can only be done by having a policy as free as possible from any suspicion of class domination. It was the fixed idea that the landed classes were getting too much and giving too little to the State—that they were trampling on the others—which solidified the middle classes against Toryism. Unfortunately for the Labour party the middle classes now have the idea that the Trade Unionists want to impose their supremacy. Many things—such as ill-considered and arbitrary strikes—have fostered this conviction. While the way in which the rates have gone up in many municipalities where Labour rules seems to indicate that a Labour Government would be without a rival in lavish expenditure of the tax-payers' money.

All these facts, and many more, are being brought to the attention of the middle classes by non-party organisations which hope to prevent that vote going to Labour. But if the Labour party has any sincere idea of a national rôle it will realise in time that it cannot, in these days, expect to carry the country in support of its class legislation merely because, in days gone by, others were so ill-advised as to enforce legislation in favour of another class. In order to broaden its policy it will have to rid itself of its extreme element. In return it will probably get that much coveted middle class vote which will one day carry it to power. In the meantime it might advantageously adopt the suggestion of the *Manchester Guardian* that it should not oppose selected candidates, belonging to other parties, who stand for progress.

That the country will ever be converted to nationalism is

doubtful. The great difficulty which Labour leaders meet in preaching that doctrine is that they are unable to point to any country where it has really been a success. It has been tried in many—but has always been found wanting, and sometimes been practically abandoned. The State railways in France do not compare with those controlled by private ownership—except in the size of their annual deficits. The postal and telegraph services are lamentable. In the United States the period of Government ownership during the war brought confusion to every service it took in hand. For an essential point about national ownership and operation is not only that it costs more, but that it gives less; the lack of efficiency is always marked. One would naturally have expected the much-governed Germany to have afforded a useful example. But the German railways have never been up to the first-class standard as regards either comfort or speed.

An opportunity to see how far the English character was in keeping with national ownership was given during the war. The result, once again, was to prove that Government control means extravagance and mismanagement.[70] This could only be minimised by restrictions which the public would find galling in the extreme; while it is curious to reflect that during the war no section of the community objected so strongly to such restrictions as there were as did Labour.

Again, the Labour party has yet to establish that it has some idea of economical administration, all the more so because some of the extremists have made it rather too clear that they look forward to spending other people's money.

Finally, another bar to success at the polls is the attitude of the party about the conduct of foreign affairs. The day will not

soon come in England when a majority of the country will consent to foreign policy being controlled by any hybrid internationalism—by a congress at Berne or Amsterdam, any more than by dictates coming from Moscow. That is a taint of which the Labour party will have to purge itself before it achieves office.

Neither in England nor in France will the last active intervention of Labour in international affairs be soon forgotten. That was a few days before the war, when German Labour leaders went out of their way to convince Jaurès and their other French friends that there would probably be no declaration of war; but that if there was, the German Labour and Socialist members of the Reichstag would refuse to vote the necessary credits. For the greater part they voted like lambs and fought or worked like tigers.[71] The national feeling which that indicated is not (in my opinion) to their discredit. But it is not consistent with any pretence of internationalism.

Everything the German Government did during the war was in the interest of their own capital and labour (for it was understood that they necessarily went hand in hand), and for the post-war extinction and oppression of the capital and labour of its enemies. The French Socialist party has lost all political influence precisely because of the horror which the country has of any tinge of internationalism under German auspices. No doubt English Labour leaders have already found instructive reading in *The Industries of Occupied France*. This was a book of 482 pages (containing many tables and plans), the work of 200 German officers serving in France, chosen on account of their technical knowledge of the various industries, which was published in February, 1916. It was sent to all the German Chambers of Commerce and other financial and commercial

associations throughout the country. A copy of this confidential publication was given to the Supreme Council in February, 1919. Its object was to show how German capital and German labour might profit by the destruction which had been wrought in France; either that caused in the course of warfare or that which was systematic and deliberate. It abounds in statements such as the following: “Bleaching and dyeing. Everything in copper and all the driving belts have been taken down and sent to Germany. And an important outlet is thus opened for machines of German manufacture.” “Wool spinning-mills. In the factories almost all the copper parts of the boilers and the leather belts have been taken away. . . . Germany ought to be in a position to recommence her full production at least two years before France.”

If the Labour party limits itself to a determination to maintain peace and to frown upon designs of territorial expansion on the part of any country, it will rest on firm ground. But if it makes any brand of internationalisation a component part of its creed it is unlikely to be in power for years to come.

The probability is that the Labour party will undergo great changes between a comparatively brief period. In its inner mechanism there is more to be admired than is generally known. Labour members represent their constituents more truly and more independently than do many on the other side of the House. Most of them are men of no private means and of small incomes who could, in these days, make much more if they were not in political life. During a recent inquiry regarding members’ salaries, a Labour member told how his parliamentary allowance was spent—in eking out an existence—and said that he gave in all £5 a year as subscriptions to charitable and other organisations in his constituency. For the people who send these

men into Parliament pay the expenses of their own political associations without looking for assistance. They elect whom they want and owe nothing, and are under no obligation to their member. Yet how many who are to-day sitting on the right of the Speaker give part (or all) of their parliamentary allowance to support the party association in their own constituency, entirely aside from their manifold donations so charitable, religious, sporting, and other organisations. The men who form these Conservative or Coalition associations are, upon the whole, much better off than those who send Labour members to Westminster. But they are also much less independent. They place so little value upon the franchise that they will not even pay their own way. The Lord Chancellor (in speaking of the divorce laws) told the Upper House that the Law was ingenious enough to cope with any conditions. Possibly a broad inquiry will one day furnish evidence which will lead to much needed legislation on this subject.

While there are not many Labour members who have made any great mark in the House of Commons, there are some who can well hold their own with all comers. I will refer to two only. To Mr. Clynes, with his quiet manner and his lucid statements, the House always listens attentively. Perhaps more than anyone else in his party he would command confidence as a Minister of the Crown in a Labour Government. Mr. J. H. Thomas is forcible or persuasive at will, and generally throws a new light on every subject. That he has great moral courage he has proved time and again outside of Parliament, when he has told Labour meetings, in plain language, what would be the outcome of unjustifiable strikes. As a negotiator in a difficult crisis he has more than once rendered great service to his country. But it is regrettable that Mr. Thomas, who is by no

means so convincing when he writes as when he talks, was recently so indiscreet as to become an author. He drew a picture of the future—when Labour rules—which was undoubtedly distasteful to the great majority of his fellow countrymen. Whilst his fallacies and contradictions left him an easy prey to anyone who cared to analyse his rather shallow production. Unfortunately for the Labour leader, the Duke of Northumberland seems to have been sighing, "O that mine enemy should write a book!" He turned his attention to Mr. Thomas's and completely demolished it, even in the opinion of many who would have preferred to have been able to agree with Mr. Thomas rather than with the Duke. It was not that the latter wrote anything very forcible, but Mr. Thomas's work was at once feeble and elementary.

It is to be hoped that Mr. Thomas, who is a national asset, will take the lesson to heart; that he will remember that the cobbler should stick to his last. He excels in talking and persuading, not in writing and pondering. Moreover, a leader of a progressive party stultifies himself when he attempts to write the last word of a political or social creed. The Duke of Northumberland had a right to do that because he holds opinions which neither time nor events will change. But Mr. Thomas has only created for himself a source of future embarrassment.

Undoubtedly the day will come when Mr. Thomas and Mr. Clynes, Mr. Hodges, Mr. Jack Jones, and others, will spend their week-ends at Chequers Court, waited on by the footmen or other staff for whose payment Lord and Lady Lee have provided in making their generous gift. Money amassed in America has been spent in many strange ways little contemplated by its maker. But it is difficult to imagine anything more fantastic than a fortune made in Stock Exchange or banking transactions with

and for capitalistic trusts being used to provide a country home for those who are the avowed enemies of such combinations.

When all is said, it would seem that Mr. Lloyd George should still be able to sleep tranquilly at 10 Downing Street. In the political world there is no one outside his net who can do him much present harm. His tenure of office would appear to be secure.

Unfortunately for the Prime Minister's peace of mind, he has an enemy more powerful by far than any parliamentary opponent hitherto named, and whose voice reaches further than that of the loudest mouth orator. Lord Northcliffe and his numerous satellites are constantly on the alert; they neither give nor take any rest.

CHAPTER X.

Lord Northcliffe and his Press.

It is almost a tragedy that the man who of all others is most sensitive to newspaper criticism should have made an enemy of the man who controls the most powerful and the most unsparingly outspoken newspapers in England.

Lloyd George's weakness in this respect has long been a source of amusement to European statesmen. They are unable to understand how anyone who has been in public life for so many years can worry unduly about comments or attacks in the Press. M. Painlevé once mentioned to me this characteristic of Mr. Lloyd George, who, he said, particularly disliked the articles of a certain French journalist, whom Painlevé cited by the pseudonym under which he writes. I mentioned his real name, whereupon Painlevé remarked that the fact that he had never before known who it was indicated the degree of importance which French politicians were wont to attach to such articles.

The only practical result of the Prime Minister's hyper-sensitiveness to newspaper criticism is that he has exposed his weak point as a target for those who are inimical to him, and has alienated others who were not disposed to be unfriendly. The French Press mocks (and not without reason) at the way Lloyd George winces under the comments of "Pertinax" in *L'Echo de Paris* and of M. Jules Sauerwein in *Le Matin*. He has from time to time tried to placate the former. While his aversion to the plain statements of the latter is so well known that at the time of

the Conference of London in 1921 one Paris journal[72] reported that he had thought of having Sauerwein deported; although anyone conversant with English methods must know that whatever might have been Mr. Lloyd George's irritation there could be no solid foundation for that statement.

It is not the differences between the British and French Governments which are primarily responsible for the disfavour with which the French Press regards Mr. Lloyd George, but simply his system of sacrificing anything or anybody in order to safeguard his own susceptibilities.

A few months ago Mr. Frank Simmonds, who is perhaps better known in England and France than any other American journalist, wrote that if the British Prime Minister attended the Washington Conference he would find himself an "object of suspicion." The reasons given were such incidents as Mr. Lloyd George's attempt to stop the publication in the *New York World* of an article which he regarded as politically embarrassing, as well as his conduct at the Peace Conference, where "his quarrels with the Paris Press are sufficiently notorious to need no recalling."

Mr. Simmonds said plainly that "if Mr. Lloyd George should come to the United States surrounded by the group of newspaper friends and Press agents who served his interests at Paris, and should employ the same methods— that is, should seek the suppression of news—almost incalculable harm would be done to the whole cause of Anglo-American friendship."

Undoubtedly Lord Riddell is answerable for much. That excessively able man may have talents which qualify him to be an excellent Press agent. But he was grotesquely out of place in dealing with the foreign Press. He was lacking in both

knowledge and experience. No doubt he sometimes prevented Mr. Lloyd George's sensibilities from being ruffled. But his methods did not make for good feelings amongst the Allies. For, despite much dining together, the truth is that when Lord Riddell did not amuse he exasperated those for whom it was his duty to act as intermediary.

The whole question may be summed up by saying that the French and American Press are at one in their fixed objections to being either bullied or bamboozled. Apparently the Press is moderately indifferent to either the praise or the blame of Mr. Lloyd George, but is determined to report his doings as it sees them.

But the fact remains that the Prime Minister will never realize that newspaper comment is fairly the lot of the politician. He both fears and resents it. Sometimes he blusters in reply. Sometimes he tries to cajole his critics or to stifle their criticism.

When the *Daily Chronicle*, once his faithful supporter, began to annoy him by its attacks, his friends bought it and placed the control in safe hands. In brief, he will adopt any feasible method to avoid having a hostile Press. The one thing he is temperamentally incapable of doing is to accept any reproof gracefully.

This was illustrated years ago in the unfortunate Marconi case. It will be remembered that Mr. Lloyd George (as well as Lord Reading, then Sir Rufus Isaacs) made very humble speeches in the House of Commons, admitting their grave error of judgment, but denying any conscious wrong-doing; and then, according to precedent, withdrew while the House decided their fate. In the result both the Prime Minister and the future Lord

Chief Justice and Viceroy were saved from what was very nearly the consequence of their Marconi speculations—the closing of their political careers. But a few days later Mr. Lloyd George, being then out of the woods, delivered a speech at the National Liberal Club which can only be described as defiant in tone, and which doubtless would have turned the majority against him had he made it in the House of Commons instead of the more penitent discourse with which he wisely sought to conciliate that assembly.

The Prime Minister's susceptibility to newspaper attacks arises partly from the fact that popularity is essential to his well-being (at which Clemenceau used to gibe behind his back, and of which he sometimes took advantage in his negotiations), and partly from his sense of the injustice of one who wants at any cost to please and to be applauded by the majority of his fellow-countrymen being assailed by them.

Lloyd George is not naturally a maker of public sentiment. Upon one occasion—and the most critical of all—he did give a lead; and the memory of that will always be his greatest claim to renown. But leaving aside that notable instance an examination of his career will show that, while he has sometimes excited the passions of a class, he has seldom formed the judgment of the country. He prefers to find out what is public opinion (and no one is more clever in the art of divining it early in the day), and to adopt it as his own. He is positively grieved when the force of circumstances obliges him to take a line which he knows will not be popular; and, unfortunately for Mr. Lloyd George, the conditions after a great war are such that any Government must do many things which tend to make it disliked.

These characteristics of the Prime Minister have led him

into a habit of reviling the Press whenever it disagrees with him or with his policy. No names are then too bad for it; no good motive is then imputed to it. The British Press is so free and incorruptible that it probably never takes such outbursts seriously; and all the less so because it is common knowledge that no politician in our history has made such use of newspapers as has Mr. Lloyd George. But nevertheless it is an unhealthy state of affairs that any statesman, through an incapacity to bear blame, should impute unworthy ends to newspapers which may sincerely think that he is at fault. This situation has become at once graver and more ludicrous through other Ministers of the Crown copying the example of their Chief. After all, Mr. Lloyd George, with his great qualities, with his weaknesses, and, above all, with his record of services to the country, is in a sense a person apart; and much allowance must be made for his foibles. But it becomes another matter when his colleagues feel bound to imitate him; when, for instance, Sir Worthington Evans begins to lecture the Press, as he did last session in the House of Commons.

Mr. Bonar Law, with his infallible good sense, has a much keener sense of proportion. Speaking in 1915, he said:

> "It is the right, not only of every member of the House, but of every newspaper in this country, on every platform, if he honestly believes that a member of the Government is incompetent or is not properly doing his work, to try to get rid of that member, even if his trying to do so does create a want of confidence in the Government."

For the last few years Mr. Lloyd George's standing quarrel has been with Lord Northcliffe. During the War their relations

varied. Sometimes they were at one. Sometimes the Northcliffe Press attacked Mr. Lloyd George. Sometimes the latter went out of his way to be conciliating. Lord Northcliffe was sent on several missions by the Government. He was, it is understood, offered the Air Ministry. The country was never apprised of this by any official or semi-official announcement—nor, curiously, was Lord Cowdray, who then held the office. But Lord Northcliffe published a letter he had written declining the post, and in which he had also embodied a little sermon upon the Cabinet's shortcomings. Later, he was at the head of the department in charge of propaganda work in enemy countries. But it was after the Armistice that relations became strained, until finally they reached the breaking point. It is said that Northcliffe wished to be one of the British representatives at the Peace Conference, and that the Prime Minister refused to consider the suggestion. No direct proof has ever been advanced that any such overtures were made by Lord Northcliffe or on his behalf, though it is true that before the end of the War, in 1917, he was generally credited with cherishing that ambition. But it is significant that Mr. Lloyd George, speaking in the House of Commons on April 16th, 1919, intimated clearly that Lord Northcliffe (whom he did not mention by name) had asked for something which he had not seen fit to give him; and that that was the cause of the bitter hostility of the Northcliffe Press towards his Government.

The offensive nature of the comments about Lord Northcliffe was aggravated by the fact that, when referring to him, Lloyd George touched his forehead, as if to indicate mental derangement.

Such remarks, made in such a place and in such a way, would render any reconciliation difficult even between men

with tough skins. Undoubtedly Mr. Lloyd George had provocation for his assault. But the general impression amongst those who heard the speech, amongst moderate men who were political supporters of the Government and by no means admirers of Lord Northcliffe, was that he had gone too far. It was thought regrettable that a Prime Minister should, on such an occasion, have used such language, or should have descended to reply to what he evidently considered were personal attacks. That, I believe, will also be the judgment when the incident has passed into history.

Still more doubtful was the wisdom of the onslaught. The Northcliffe newspapers may not be able to do Mr. Lloyd George all the harm which many people seem to imagine (the degree of influence which newspapers have on the electorate is generally exaggerated), but it is quite possible that his continued depreciation by a powerful press with many ramifications will have some adverse effect. Certainly it is not helpful. Moreover, the contest is unequal. For while Northcliffe may injure Lloyd George, the latter cannot in any possible way hurt Northcliffe. The basis of the prosperity and potency of newspapers is their circulation. The complaints of the Prime Minister and his colleagues about the alleged unfairness of the Northcliffe Press may find some echo in the political world and in a limited circle outside. But probably the principal and the most direct result of each of these protests is to increase the sale of the Northcliffe newspapers. Quite unconsciously Mr. Lloyd George has constituted himself one of Lord Northcliffe's most effective circulation agents.

Of course, Northcliffe's immunity is dependent upon his keeping behind the barrier of his own press. He is like a man in a fortress. Lloyd George is outside, and from time to time is

compelled to pass within range of his enemy's guns. He can do little in the way of counter-attack. For instance, the banning of Northcliffe by our Washington Embassy was simply a further advertisement of his power. But the situation changes if Northcliffe steps into the open. Lloyd George is not the man to miss any such chances. Certainly he made the most of an opportunity which Northcliffe's imprudence recently gave him. It will suffice to recall the facts briefly. On Friday, July 29th, 1921, the Prime Minister communicated to a somewhat astonished House of Commons a message from the King, denying the truth of certain statements attributed to him in an interview given in America by Lord Northcliffe, and published by the *New York Times*, and by one or more of Northcliffe's own newspapers in England or Ireland.

Lord Northcliffe, on his side, thereupon cabled to the King's secretary denying that he had ever used the words quoted by the Prime Minister, and adding, "I gave no such interview."

Possibly he would have been well advised to show a little more candour. For it appeared later that while he had not given the interview, yet that the person directly responsible was Mr. Wickham Steed, the editor of the *Times* and Lord Northcliffe's travelling companion, who had made the statements in question on the previous Monday. How it was attributed to Lord Northcliffe in his own newspapers is a matter which by this time has doubtless been settled between his henchmen and himself. But what the public would like to know is why his cable to the King's secretary did not tell the whole story; why it did not admit frankly that the statements in question had been made by Northcliffe's editor; and why, although the interview was published on Monday in New York (where Northcliffe then was), he never made the faintest protest until the House of

Commons was informed that the King had denounced the statements as untrue.

The *New York Times* had rightly attributed the interview to Mr. Wickham Steed. But it maintained the accuracy of its report of what the latter had said. Mr. Wickham Steed promised to give explanations. The only one he gave publicly was a rather lame excuse to the effect that he had mentioned things which he had not thought would be published, thus leaving intact the fact that those statements, on the authority of the King, were false. After that Lord Northcliffe and Mr. Wickham Steed promptly left New York. The former crossed the Continent as quickly as possible; and even his own diligent press could find no sayings of his to record until he had put the comfortable distance of three thousand miles between himself and this unfortunate incident.

A Frenchman who, on account of his political connections, as well as for other reasons, has long been a figure in international politics, and who was on friendly personal terms with both Lloyd George and Northcliffe, told me that some time ago he was instigated to try and heal the breach. He mentioned the suggestion to Lloyd George, saying that he would also approach Northcliffe if the Prime Minister consented. But the latter replied that he had come to the conclusion that, if he had to have an enemy, he would rather it should be Northcliffe than anyone else.

There may well have been many excellent reasons why Mr. Lloyd George did not want any overtures to be made to Lord Northcliffe, but I doubt if that was the real one.

Even those who have no special reason to like Lord Northcliffe (amongst whom I count myself) must admit that he is always a great national character, and at times a great national

asset. A book by the late Mr. Kennedy Jones recently gave rise to some discussion as to whether he made Lord Northcliffe, or vice versa. One reviewer said that, from Mr. Kennedy Jones's story, one would imagine that it was a very lucky day for Northcliffe when they met, but that Fleet Street thought the fortunate one was Kennedy Jones. The truth probably lies in another direction. Doubtless Kennedy Jones excelled Lord Northcliffe in the management of a daily newspaper (he had, it is alleged, a peculiar talent for brutally eliminating all incompetents), and would have made a fortune even if he had never brought the *Evening News* proposal to Mr. Alfred Harmsworth; while probably Lord Rothermere is a shrewder man of affairs than Lord Northcliffe. But Northcliffe has a touch of genius or greatness which neither of the other two possesses, and which he certainly did not get through having Kennedy Jones as a partner or Lord Rothermere as a brother.

In France the political world was never in any doubt about Northcliffe. In the conversation to which I have already alluded, when indifference was expressed about Asquith resigning, provided Lloyd George remained in office, the statesman who held this view added: "You have only two really great men in England—Lloyd George and Northcliffe." If, at the end of the war, Northcliffe did not rank so highly as Lloyd George in French public opinion, it was chiefly on account of the official position occupied by the latter.

For my own part I think that Northcliffe as a personality is greater, infinitely greater, than his press, and that the way in which his newspapers constantly refer to him tends both to diminish his position and to lessen their influence. Nothing which he does is left unadvertised. No word of his is permitted to fall to the ground. The state of his health is recorded with

meticulous care. But the only result of this misplaced zeal on the part of his satellites is to create a certain mild amusement both in England and on the Continent.

Two instances of what I mean will suffice. One day not long ago one could read in the *Times* the following items of information:—

> "The Earl of Lathom has returned to London.
>
> "The Earl and Countess of Scarborough return to London to-day after a short visit to the Earl and Countess of Midleton at Peper-Harrow, Godalming.
>
> "Viscount Northcliffe has arrived at Cap Martin *in good health*.
>
> "Lord Glentanar has left London for Scotland.
>
> "Lord Colum Crichton-Stuart has gone abroad for a few months. Lord Queenborough has returned to 39, Berkeley Square from Nostell Priory, Wakefield."

(The italics are mine.)

The nuance is slight but typical.

This solicitude to keep before the public the name of the principal proprietor must make Delane and all the Walters turn in their graves. Nor has it even the excuse of being in deference to the custom of the day. One will search the files of the *Daily Telegraph* in vain to find any such complete and minute accounts of the doings of Lord Burnham. The *Morning Post* rarely refers to Lady Bathurst. Lord Beaverbrook occupies no undue amount of space in the columns of the *Daily Express*.

The same publicity is given to the doings of all members of the Harmsworth family who find favour in the eyes of Lord Northcliffe. In fact, it goes so far that the reports of the Northcliffe Press are not always easily reconcilable with those of other newspapers.

On June 23rd, 1921, there was a debate in the House of Commons regarding Dr. Addison's salary. An interesting comparison, in which political predilections can play no part, may be made by putting side by side the accounts given in the *Morning Post* and the Northcliffe newspapers—both equally opposed to Mr. Lloyd George on this question. From the latter one would imagine that a successful attack on the Government had been led by Mr. Esmond Harmsworth. From the former (as well as according to other newspapers) it would appear that the movement had been unsuccessful; while the name of Mr. Esmond Harmsworth is not even amongst those mentioned in the many columns given to a report of the debate.

The only result was to bring into ridicule one of the ablest and most promising of the younger members of the House of Commons; and to lend point to a comment by a French politician that the title of the Paris *Daily Mail* should be changed to the *Family Herald*.

Some months ago the publication of a book entitled "The Mirrors of Downing Street" gave rise to much comment, which was increased by the fact that the name of the author was not disclosed. A small volume of 174 pages, it contained character-sketches of various personages, including, amongst others, Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, Lord Fisher, Lord Kitchener, Mr. Asquith, Lord Haldane, and Mr. Arthur Balfour. Of the fourteen chapters one of less than nine pages was devoted to

Lord Northcliffe. The book was reviewed in the *Times* of the 15th October, 1920. The *Times* reviewer is at pains to bring forward everything good said about his proprietor, while being content to leave in the background the more unpleasant comments. In brief, it is questionable whether the review conveys a fair or a misleading account of what the author actually said about Northcliffe. It is impossible to quote in full the article from "The Mirrors of Downing Street," but no violence is being done to its text in citing the following sentences: "I should say he has no moral scruples in a fight, none at all; I doubt very much whether he ever asks himself if anything is right or wrong. I should say that he has only one question to ask of fate before he strips for a fight, Is this going to be Success or Failure? . . . But it is already apparent that, for want of balance and moral continuity in his direction of policy, Lord Northcliffe has done nothing to elevate the public mind and much to degrade it. He has jumped from sensation to sensation. He has never seen in the great body of public opinion a spirit to be patiently and orderly educated towards noble ideals, but rather a herd to be stampeded of a sudden in the direction which he himself has suddenly conceived to be the direction of success. . . . The moral and intellectual condition of the world, a position from which only a great spiritual palingenesis can deliver civilization, is a charge on the sheet which Lord Northcliffe will have to answer at the seat of judgment. He has received the price of that condition in the multitudinous pence of the people; consciously or unconsciously, he has traded on their ignorance, ministered to their vulgarities, and inflamed the lowest and most corrupting of their passions; if they had had another guide his purse had been empty."

It is true that the same sketch gives Lord Northcliffe such

commendable qualities as being a good son and “a charming and most considerate host.” He is pronounced to be romantic, generous, and boyish. Some of his mistakes are excused on the ground of his health; others are attributed to his romantic disposition. The final verdict is “He cannot be a deliberately bad man.” But it requires a reviewer who sees with one eye only to say of an article which accuses a man of having pandered to the lowest tastes in order to become rich (“he has traded on their ignorance, ministered to their vulgarities, and inflamed the lowest and most corrupting of their passions; if they had had another guide his purse had been empty”) that it is benevolent. The exact words of the review in so far as it refers to the sketch of Lord Northcliffe (and it is characteristic that whereas only nine out of 174 pages in the book are given up to Northcliffe, twenty-nine out of a review of 129 lines, including quotations, are devoted to him) are as follows: “His Lord Northcliffe is subtle, occasionally very shrewd, and on the whole benignant. Apparently he will have to answer at the judgment seat for ‘the moral and intellectual position of the world,’ but his political purpose, from beginning to end, I am entirely convinced, has been to serve what he conceives to be the highest interests of his country. I regard him in the matter of intention as one of the most honourable and courageous men of the day.’ And again: ‘All the same, it is the greatest mistake for his enemies to declare that he is nothing better than a cynical egoist trading on the enormous ignorance of the English middle classes. He is a boy, full of adventure, full of romance, and full of whims, seeing life as the finest fairy-tale in the world, and enjoying every incident that comes his way, whether it be the bitterest and most cruel of fights or the opportunity for doing some one a romantic kindness. You may see the boyishness of his nature in the devotion with which he threw himself first into

bicycling, then into motoring, and then into flying. He loves machinery. He loves every game which involves physical risk and makes severe demands on courage. His love of England is not his love of her merchants and workmen, but his love of her masculine youth.'"

The Northcliffe Press was at least consistent; for shortly afterwards it published several articles by "The Author of 'The Mirrors of Downing Street'"! The unknown writer was hardly equally so when he consented to take pay from the newspaper, which he condemned as degrading the public taste. So far as one could make out, these articles were meant to be a scathing criticism of the state of society as disclosed by the recent books of Colonel Repington and Mrs. Asquith. Indirectly it is, I think, the Northcliffe Press which is largely responsible for these works. For if that press had not for the last twenty-odd years fed the reading public with personal articles there would never have been the market which there is to-day for such outpourings.

Colonel Repington's book gives a fair idea of society in the sense that his relation of the usual kind of conversation which prevails at dinner or luncheon (and the greater part of the book is taken up with that) is sufficiently accurate. But the deductions which might naturally be drawn from such a bald account are such as to shock those whose opinion is based solely upon its perusal. The picture evidently was not to the taste of the author of "The Mirrors of Downing Street." At the risk of making an egregious error I am inclined to believe that that anonymous writer does not move in the same world as Colonel Repington.

What is of more importance than that mysterious personage having been shocked is that this day-to-day story of life in war time has given a false idea to many of our Allies. It makes them

think that English society was selfish and that the women of that society were heartless. It is true that in Paris no music was allowed during the War; that dancing was a thing unknown; that one did not dress for dinner; that the serious side of everything was given prominence. Anything else was *mauvais ton*.

In such matters the different nations must be guided by their own views. In England it was considered bad taste to dwell too much upon one's own losses or sufferings. But as regards work actually done, sacrifices actually made, Englishwomen of the set most mentioned in Repington's book have a record of things accomplished which is unequalled by the women of any other country. While the class to which they belong gave of its blood at least as liberally as any other section of the population of Great Britain.

The publication of this book at this time was regrettable because it produced many misunderstandings and served no apparent purpose. A generation from now it might have been a useful and interesting record without doing any harm. But, above all, its publication to-day was a breach of confidence upon a wholesale scale.

During the period in question I was in the habit of meeting Repington frequently at several of the houses where he continually lunched and dined. No one knows better than he that the conversation would have been somewhat different had everyone foreseen that within three or four years their remarks would be given to the world in print. No one knows better than Repington that the whole fabric of English society would be changed, that intercourse would be much less free and pleasant, if everyone felt that nothing was confidential, that talking at dinner was like declaiming from the house-tops.

Colonel Repington mis-states (only, I am sure, because he misunderstood) several things I mentioned to him, in a way which caused me some embarrassment. My full compensation came in the delight I got from reading of the indiscretions of others. Nevertheless, the book recalls the rhyme which became current upon the publication of the first part of Charles Greville's diaries:

> "For forty years he listened at the door,
> He heard some secrets and invented more."

Repington did not listen at the door, but in one way he is much more blameworthy than Greville. The latter gave nothing to the world in his own lifetime, and left his diaries to Henry Reeve to be published whenever the latter considered that the proper time had arrived. If they were published too soon, as Queen Victoria thought (though she probably believed that they should never have seen the light of day at all), the fault was Reeve's, not Greville's.

Winston Churchill has written that Mrs. Asquith's "Autobiography might well find a place in the bibliography of the Victorian era," while, according to Mr. Charles Masterman, "the first thing to note is that this book is literature. Mrs. Asquith has produced a volume which in mere form and texture alone might be envied by the greatest of contemporary writers."

It is uncomfortable to find oneself at variance with such distinguished critics. But it is not given to everyone to see this book in the same light. I think that what it does convey to those who (like myself) are not in Mrs. Asquith's intimacy, is her enormous vitality, her kindness of heart, her loyalty to her friends, and her amazing indiscretion. It would be difficult to

say what good end could be served by recounting such incidents as her flirtation with Peter Flower, or the unpleasant story about the man who followed her one night in Dresden, or the equally undelectable one about Charles Dilke. They are neither good literature nor history; and they have not even the merit of being wholesomely amusing.

One of the best things in the book is the single occasion when Mrs. Asquith is funny without knowing it. She writes (page 79): "I shrank then, as I do now, from exposing the secrets and sensations of life. Reticence should guard the soul. When I peer among my dead, or survey my living friends, I see hardly anyone with this quality." It is said that Mrs. Asquith's friends (she names two exceptions apart from her own family) were not pleased to read that, compared with herself, they were lacking in reticence. But there is some sense of humour wanting in a woman who can aver that she shrinks from exposing the sensations of her life in the same book in which she recounts in detail her love affairs, and the most intimate events of her family existence; in which she analyses her inmost feelings and drags before the public the virtues and failings of her friends who are still alive.

The truth is that both the Repington and the Asquith books were published because money was to be made by writing personalities for which the public appetite had been developed by the Northcliffe Press.

I have suggested that Lord Northcliffe injures his own press by so closely identifying it with his own personality. As regards the majority of his newspapers that is so because everyone takes the opinions they express as being Northcliffe's own, which he is propagating for his own purpose. No doubt that purpose is

generally high-minded and patriotic. But even Jove nods at odd moments. No one ever imagines that the policy advocated by the *Daily News* or by the *Manchester Guardian* is that of an individual. Although Lord Burnham is the proprietor of the *Daily Telegraph* no one thinks of that newspaper's statements as being his personal predilections. But the sayings of the Northcliffe Press are invariably taken to express what Lord Northcliffe thinks and wants. This does not affect the circulation, but the result is that the influence of these newspapers in forming public opinion is not in proportion to their circulation. For in this country there is never a disposition to regard any one man as omniscient, or as having impeccable judgment; and if Lloyd George is sometimes thought to be wrong, Lord Northcliffe is not always thought to be right. The only way in which personal journalism can have its full weight is when the proprietor himself is known to and popular with the mass of the people by whom his newspaper is read. That cannot be said of Lord Northcliffe, but it explains why the only English journalist who has successfully sunk his publication in his own identity is Mr. Horatio Bottomley.

The case of the *Times* is different. Not only is it in many ways the greatest newspaper in the world, but in the last fifteen years it has improved more than any of its contemporaries. Viewed merely from the standpoint of newspaper merit, no journal has lessened the gap which separated the *Times* from them all. Yet its influence on the Continent, which, even in our own day was enormous, is now little if any greater than that of two or three of its rivals. The main explanation of this is exactly the one I have already indicated. A European statesman with whom I recently discussed the question said: "The *Times* may, as you say, be the best newspaper, but it is the voice of one man,

and although we often share that man's opinions we do not forget that fact. It is not the voice of a party, but the voice of a person seeking to influence parties or to form one. The *Times* and the *Daily Mail* say the same thing—at different length. Lord Northcliffe has not got two voices. Whether you read his views in one or in the other depends simply on the style you prefer, the time you have to spare, or the money you care to pay. When Northcliffe bought the *Times*, and gave it and the *Daily Mail* the same texts, he did not make the *Daily Mail* a little *Times*. On the contrary, he brought down the *Times* to the standard of a big *Daily Mail*."

A *Times* correspondent in a European capital is no longer the power he once was. Naturally a de Blowitz, upon whom Prime Ministers used to call, does not appear twice in a generation. But the importance of the *Times* representative abroad is now not commensurate with the greatness of that newspaper. Few of them are quoted except perfunctorily. Their opinion carries no great weight. The unfortunate truth is that in regard to their knowledge of foreign affairs English journalists are for the greater part outclassed by their French colleagues, as well as by many German writers.

Upon the whole, Northcliffe does not sacrifice any principle in order to vent his personal feelings against Lloyd George. A Prime Minister who takes upon himself the burden of office in the period following war must necessarily encounter many difficulties and make some mistakes. He has no right to expect that his enemies will overlook such errors. The Northcliffe Press has made a great deal out of alleged waste on the part of the Government. Obviously it is difficult to cut down expenses and reduce establishments as quickly as everyone would like; while criticism is easy and will always find favour with the

taxpayer. But when all allowances are made it must be said that the Government showed no disposition to act vigorously until it was finally forced to do so by the country. In this matter Lloyd George played into the hands of Northcliffe. As, however, the Northcliffe Press has supported his Government on other subjects, the fact seems to be that Northcliffe will not deviate from his own ideas merely in order to attack the Prime Minister; but that he is pleased when the latter lays himself open, and makes the most of the opportunity.

Lloyd George can do little or nothing to hurt Northcliffe. The latter's independence is his strength. It is also his weakness, as it leaves him with no responsibility except to himself, a point which the electorate thoroughly appreciates. Yet it is idle to pretend that his imagination and his energy are not used for what he considers to be the good of his country.

When one reads the account of Mr. Lloyd George's vacillations at the Peace Conference, his gloomy prediction that the Germans would not sign whenever he had been frightened by the conversation of a Labour leader, his desire to change all decisions and to yield to Germany on every important point at the last moment, when one remembers all that has happened since the Treaty was signed, one regrets that the Prime Minister did not have Lord Northcliffe by his side at Versailles and afterwards; the situation in Europe would to-day have been clearer and healthier.

CHAPTER XI.

The Frankfort Incident and M. Krassin.

Two misunderstandings which have arisen between England and France since 1919—one a passing incident which, however, nearly precipitated a crisis, the other a difference in policy which persists to this day—deserve separate notice; the occupation of Frankfort by the French in April, 1920; and the commercial treaty made by the British Government with Soviet Russia.

On August 19th, 1919, Marshal Foch, acting as Chief of the Inter-Allied Staff, issued a protocol which limited the number of German troops in the Ruhr to 17,000 until April 10th, 1920; and provided that, after that date no German troops whatever should be left in that zone. This protocol was accepted by the German Government.

On March 28th, 1920, M. Millerand told the German Chargé d'Affaires that the French Government, so far as it was concerned, would not authorise any increase of the number of German troops in the Ruhr, unless the French troops also simultaneously occupied Frankfort, Darmstadt, Homburg, Dalou, and Dieburg.

The following day M. Goeppert, the Envoy Extraordinary sent to Paris by the German Government to discuss this matter, assured the French Government that further troops would not be allowed to penetrate into this district unless consent had first

been obtained.

On April 2nd M. Millerand repeated to the German Chargé d'Affaires the declaration he had already made to him on March 28th.

Nevertheless, on the evening of April 3rd M. Goeppert admitted that troops in excess of the number authorised by the Inter-Allied Protocol had been sent to the Ruhr. He asked that a formal authorisation should then be given to cover what had already been done without authorisation; what had been done in violation of the Treaty; what had been done against the express refusal of the French Government to agree; and what had been done in breach of his own promise that no such step should be taken unless that consent had previously been given.

Moreover, on the same day the German Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs told General Barthelmy, in Berlin, that the German Government had given the Imperial Commissaire entire liberty of action regarding the employment of troops in the Ruhr, and that he assumed full responsibility for this.

On April 6th French troops entered Frankfort and other German territory.

It should be added that the question had already been considered at a meeting of the Supreme Council in London, which on March 25th had expressed the opinion that the time was not opportune for the occupation of Frankfort and Darmstadt.

The only reproach which could fairly be made to France (the country most affected and possibly menaced by this defiance of the Treaty) was that perhaps sufficient time was not given for a reasonable notice to all the Allies between the day

when the occupation was decided upon and the date of its actual execution.

When the news arrived in England Parliament had adjourned for a few days on account of the Easter holidays. In many instances of German derelictions from the Treaty Mr. Lloyd George's Government had prudently (sometimes perhaps too prudently) avoided taking the public into its confidence until forced to do so by the House of Commons; and even then had done so only partially and with evident reluctance. But upon this occasion no advantage was taken of the fact that Parliament was not sitting. The Government did not wait to be asked its opinion about the French occupation of Frankfort. Much less did it wait to be pressed. On the contrary journalists were summoned in all haste, use was made of a press agency, and the Government itself issued a semi-official statement to the effect that there was no reason why the whole world should not know that all the Allies disapproved of what France had done.

This extraordinary announcement was sent forth by a Government official, from a Government office, at the sole instance of the Government. The moving spirit was Mr. Philip Kerr, of the Prime Minister's secretariat, and his private adviser in the conduct of foreign affairs. How far the Foreign Office was consulted beforehand, or how far it was faced with a *fait accompli* and was thus obliged to follow in the wake of Mr. Lloyd George's henchman, it is impossible to say. In any event, it would not have been the first time that Lord Curzon had seen himself ousted by Mr. Philip Kerr. Any more than it would have been the first time that the latter had given a startling example of his indiscretion. His lack of sagacity had already been demonstrated, to his own confusion, by the Bullitt episode.

The most regrettable feature of this strange performance was that the facts stated were absolutely incorrect. It was untrue that all the Allies disapproved of what France had done. On the contrary, Belgium showed her approbation by placing her railways at the disposal of the French Government. While at the time the statement was issued to the Press neither Japan nor Italy had expressed any opinion whatever. It was, indeed, the first of several occasions in which Mr. Lloyd George's Government seemed to take the stand that in addressing France it could presume to speak alone in the name of all the Allies.

At the outbreak of this disagreement Mr. Lloyd George had left London to meet the other Ministers of the Allied Powers at San Remo. Going by sea he was for some days able to let matters take their course. In the meantime Parliament reassembled. Mr. Bonar Law properly avoided various questions of which notice had been given by undertaking to make a pronouncement in the name of the Government. The gist of his remarks was that even if the English and French point of view was different, it was, above all, important that there should be no discussion which should direct the attention of Germany to this passing disaccord. The idea was in itself well founded. But in the circumstances its expression by the spokesman of the Government was impudent. Its audacity could only be excused upon the plea that desperate cases demand desperate remedies. For it was the Government itself which had gone out of its way to do its utmost to draw the attention of Germany to the fact that it dissented from the French action in occupying Frankfort.

Some days later Mr. Bonar Law was asked directly in the House of Commons whether or not the Government admitted its responsibility for the communication made to the Press—that

there was no reason why the whole world should not know that all the Allies disapproved of the French occupation of Frankfort. There was no indignant denial on the part of Mr. Bonar Law. On the contrary his reply was “I must beg my honourable friend not to press the question.”

No admission could be more complete.

The occupation of Frankfort was one of the rare instances in which German disregard of the Treaty and defiance of the Allies has been followed by prompt action, instead of by lengthy conferences, by temporising, and often by yielding. The effect was excellent.

Moreover, the occupation itself was admirably conducted. There was neither disorder at the outset nor oppression of any kind during its continuance. When the French left Frankfort they were able to placard the town with posters in German reading: “The French keep their word.”

From this period there was ground for the impression that the sanctity which Mr. Lloyd George attached to the Treaty of Versailles varied in degree according as to whether or not what he had promised to his electors was involved.

When the Prime Minister arrived at San Remo he followed his habitual course when embarrassed by his own actions; he defended the position he had taken by himself attacking. He assailed M. Millerand, suggesting that by the occupation of Frankfort France had shown that she harboured designs of territorial expansion. He became white in the face (so M. Millerand afterwards related) as he denounced Great Britain’s Ally for having shown Germany that she could not with impunity flout the Treaty of Versailles and the orders of Maréchal Foch.

It is difficult to believe that Mr. Lloyd George's explosion proceeded from any sincere belief that France had any covetous designs upon Germany, or had any intention to go beyond the terms of the Treaty. His advisers must have been singularly ill-informed and strangely deluded if they had conceived such ideas. They certainly had no facts in support of that theory; and M. Millerand was doubtless surprised that he should have been called upon to calm such unjustifiable alarms.

But the whole scene is in keeping with the Prime Minister's procedure throughout the Peace Conference. According to the opinion of Mr. Lansing, the American Secretary of State, he acted more like a politician than a statesman, and was prone to attack his opponents whenever he himself had made a mistake. "He was better in attack than defence. . . . Sometimes, if he seemed to be getting the worst of the argument, he assumed a scoffing and even blustering manner which did not harmonise with the sedateness of the Counsel of Ten. . . . If shown that his argument was based on false premises he unblushingly changed the premises, but not the argument."

M. Millerand was in such good faith regarding the Frankfort incident that he had no trouble in making his position clear. Nor, indeed, did he take very seriously the attitude assumed by the Prime Minister upon this subject. It was, however, an inauspicious beginning for the San Remo Conference. Nor was the general situation improved by the tone which Mr. Lloyd George adopted in discussing the French reparation claims. In some quarters he was thought to have gone so far as to have shown absolute hostility to France. The secret Government report of the discussions which took place at San Remo created the profoundest surprise in Paris. Neither M. Deschanel (who was then President of the Republic) nor M. Poincaré hesitated

to express their amazement and disappointment when they spoke of the subject some days later to an English politician.

Undoubtedly, in this instance, Mr. Lloyd George did not give France the support which she had the right to expect, and by his conduct both impaired the Treaty and weakened the Entente between the two countries.

It is, however, difficult to see how the Prime Minister can justly be criticised for adopting a policy which he thinks is in the best interests of Great Britain upon another matter not covered by the Treaty of Versailles. That the views of our Ally should be given due consideration goes without saying. But there is no reason why the Government should adopt the opinions of the Quai d'Orsay unless it is satisfied that they are to the advantage of Great Britain or of the Allies as a whole.

The French Press has constantly blamed Mr. Lloyd George's Government for having made a commercial arrangement with Soviet Russia. It had every right to express its opinion when it was limited to suggesting that the agreement was futile or one which was inadvisable from a British standpoint. But the idea that the Government should have abstained from making any pact with M. Krassin merely because France did not want to do likewise, is essentially ill-founded. Mr. Lloyd George may have been right or may have been wrong in his conception of the subject and in his belief of the results of the transaction. But there is nothing to prove that the French view was correct; and the British Government did its duty in carrying out negotiations for which it took full responsibility before the country.

Such incidents as Mr. Lloyd George's message to Poland in 1920, sent without prior notice to the Quai d'Orsay, and the equally regrettable action of the French Foreign Office itself

(due, it is said, to M. Maurice Paléologue, formerly Ambassador to Russia) in recognising Wrangel without frankly forewarning Downing Street, led to misunderstandings which were more stupid in their origin than serious in their consequences. The resulting disagreements were fleeting in their nature. But upon the subject of recognising or having any dealings with the Soviet Government the views of the British and the French Governments were as far apart in June, 1921, as they were a year ago.

When the question arose during the Peace Conference M. Clemenceau expressed himself as being opposed to having any meeting or communication with representatives of the Bolshevist Government, fearing that the prestige of that régime would thereby be increased. Mr. Lloyd George had objected to various conditions which France wished to impose on Germany upon the ground that to exasperate the latter country would indirectly have the effect of strengthening the Soviet Government. Nevertheless, he did not see things in the same light when the idea of negotiations with Moscow was discussed. Finally, he was mainly responsible for the absurd Prinkipo plan, which in its sequence afforded Clemenceau more ironical amusement than serious anxiety.

In respect to the Bullitt episode it may be dismissed by saying that if Mr. Philip Kerr was indiscreet and ill-advised in writing such a letter (even if it was marked “Private and Confidential”) that does not in the slightest degree excuse Bullitt for making the public use which he did of it.

The incident forcibly recalls the story (doubtless apocryphal) of the German submarine officer who was reported to have said to his British captor “You know that we shall never

be gentlemen, but you will always be fools."[73]

The status of the Russian Government was again discussed at the San Remo Conference. It was then agreed, at the urgent instance of Mr. Lloyd George, that the Allies should have conversations with the representatives whom the Soviet Government were sending to England. But it was understood that these interviews should be strictly limited to negotiations for a commercial arrangement with, and not a political recognition of, the Bolshevists.

The Prime Minister gave what at first seemed to be a liberal interpretation to this compact. For some time after his return to London he himself, together with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Curzon, received M. Krassin.

A few days later, on the Friday following, I had a long conversation with the latter. It was at that time agreed between us that, whatever might be the outcome, neither should then divulge what was said at our meetings. This understanding M. Krassin faithfully observed. On my side I now refer to the matter for the first time and without disclosing any details communicated to me which were in any way confidential. I am bound to say that M. Krassin not only talked freely, but answered without undue reserve all pertinent questions, even when the replies were not such as to support his own case. It is perhaps unnecessary to add that I never heard a syllable of propaganda; nor, for that matter, did I ever exchange a word with anyone except M. Krassin.

Krassin impressed me as being a man of affairs rather than a dreamer or a fanatic; and as one who would prefer to construct rather than to destroy. Nor did he appear to be a politician. This view was confirmed when he expressed his regret that the

British Government had refused to allow Litvinoff to enter England, saying that while he himself was prepared to discuss commercial matters he did not feel equally at home in respect to the political and diplomatical considerations which might be raised by the question of the External Debt or otherwise.

When the war broke out Krassin was the Russian representative of an important group of German electrical interests. His friendship with Lenin dates back many years. The late Joseph Reinach once told me that M. de Saint-Sauveur, who acted for the Creusot-Schneider firm in Russia, had business relations with Krassin which sometimes led them to lunch together, and that upon one such occasion M. de Saint-Sauveur remarked that possibly Krassin would be embarrassed by the recent announcement that some one bearing his name had become a member of the Bolshevist administration. Krassin replied that he himself was the individual, and that Lenin, who was a former schoolfellow, had previously protected him during a period when he was in some personal danger.

Certainly Krassin's views have been a marked factor in Lenin's gradual evolution.

The representative of the Soviet Government and myself naturally saw many things—most things—from an entirely different angle. However, we were not interested in debating political theories, but only in discussing whether or not it might be possible to arrive at a certain practical result. M. Krassin desired to enter into negotiations with France as well as with England. He admitted that France would never entirely abandon her claim to the repayment of the Russian loans floated in France; that no French Government could do so, even if it would. But he contended that any mode of eventual settlement

was necessarily a matter for negotiation, and also that such settlement should be dependent upon some recognition of the Soviet Government by the French Republic. He complained that whereas Mr. Lloyd George and Lord Curzon had opened their doors to him, France had sent only commercial attachés who had no power or authority to go into the whole subject.

M. Krassin did not hide from me that the result of England and France both absolutely refusing to have any dealings with Russia would mean a war with Poland. He admitted that such a war might be lengthy, and said that Russia was making preparations accordingly.

Neither then nor later did I discuss with M. Krassin the Bolshevist doctrine, its aim, or its effect. But I did take it upon myself to lay stress upon the fact that if Soviet Russia was making application for re-admission to the General Society of Nations, it must be prepared to conform to the established rules and customs of international intercourse, and especially in respect to propaganda; that otherwise any arrangement would certainly only be temporary; and that its abrupt termination would leave the situation worse than it then was. I added that the attitude of the French Government was strictly in accordance with the San Remo Agreement—commercial but not political negotiations—and that it was no secret that the Quai d'Orsay was surprised that he had been received by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary.

Nevertheless, at my second interview with M. Krassin on the following day (Saturday), and after a conversation which I do not feel at liberty to transcribe fully from my notes, I agreed to see M. Millerand, and to submit certain proposals to him. I telephoned later in the same day to the French Foreign Office,

got a reply that M. Millerand would receive me on Sunday, and crossed to Paris that evening.

I am naturally obliged to refrain from repeating in detail what M. Millerand said in the course of our conversation at the Quai d'Orsay. The result may be summed up by stating that the French Prime Minister did not care to enter into any negotiations with the Soviet Government or to receive an envoy who would then place before him formally the proposals which were thus being unofficially submitted to him.

Whatever the exact measure of the arrangement made with Mr. Lloyd George at San Remo it was evident that it had been largely due to the latter's insistence; that M. Millerand conceived that he had done his part in deputing commercial attachés to be present at interviews with M. Krassin; and that he had no intention of going further. Apparently he counted upon some future developments in Russia, but without any fixed notion of what turn they would take. Upon the other hand, he was somewhat surprised that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary should have seen M. Krassin, thus possibly according some political significance to his mission.[74] The obvious answer was that in dealing with Russia it was difficult to define exactly where commercial questions ended and political questions began.

My own part in the conversation, aside from placing certain proposals before M. Millerand and answering his queries on certain points, was limited to urging upon the President my conviction that Mr. Lloyd George would undoubtedly come to an arrangement with Soviet Russia; and that although there would probably be criticism in some quarters, yet that the Prime Minister would not be clashing with public opinion in doing so.

While I ventured to suggest that the fact that France was Russia's heaviest creditor would not be considered in England an obstacle to commercial relations unless France herself could suggest a policy more feasible than that of military interference or more practical than that of doing nothing and letting events take their course.

Nothing which has happened since has falsified those predictions or changed my views. Mr. Lloyd George did make the agreement with M. Krassin, as he always intended to do. It is true that the brilliant campaign directed by General Weygand bred illusions in some quarters that the Soviet power was tottering. But the only real effect of the Polish success was a treaty which gave the Moscow Government time to turn around and to drive out of the country Wrangel, who had been recognised by the French Government.[75]

The practical wisdom of the French attitude may be questioned. It is all the more doubtful because France is the one country in Europe which need have little fear of the inroads of Bolshevism. The primary effect of that political theory seems to have been the division of land amongst the peasants (it is said that more than 99 per cent. of it is now so held) while coupling with that division the theory of communism which deprives the holder of any personal property in the products. But in a country where nearly everyone is a proprietor there is little chance of success for a political doctrine which wishes to limit that already acquired ownership by the addition of communistic principles, which proprietors would regard only as a handicap.

Perhaps more than any other country France should remember that a revolution cannot be judged until the next generation. The French Revolution was accompanied by

excesses which for a time almost debarred France from the society of nations. Yet it left its indelible mark upon Europe. When its results were sifted something remained, and has remained to this day. It was M. Clemenceau himself who, upon a memorable occasion, pronounced that the French Revolution had to be taken *en bloc*—the bad with the good.

In Russia, a country so much vaster in its extent than France, so much more sparsely populated, and where the mass of the people in 1916 was more ignorant and less interested in political development than were the French in 1789, it was obvious that any upheaval would be mightier and more appalling; and that the immediate result would be to place absolute power in the hands of some small group.

M. Maurice Paléologue, in the diary he kept during his Ambassadorship at Petrograd, has repeated the words which a great Russian financier used to him in June, 1915:

> "In our country the Revolution is bound to be destructive because the educated class represents only an infinitesimal minority, without organisation or political experience, without any contact with the masses. There, according to my opinion, lies the great crime of Tsarism; it has refused to allow outside of its own bureaucracy any *foyer* of political life."[76]

It is difficult to conceive how British loyalty to France exacted that she should have no dealings with Soviet Russia. Even if France had suggested some definite course it would have been the duty of the British Government to examine with great care how far it should sacrifice to the Entente a policy which it considered to be in the interests of Great Britain. But

that point never arose, for France never advanced any practical plan.

By standing aside and doing nothing France is not hastening the date of the payment of the Russian debt. On the contrary, probably the main security which remains for that debt—the natural resources of the country—is thus being diminished in value. Certainly its realisation is being delayed. While France does not gain by other countries getting the start in renewing relations with Russia and doubtless soon obtaining valuable concessions. Unfortunately no French Government has suggested any policy upon this question except "wait and see." That is exactly what other countries will not do.

The situation would be different if there was any suggestion that the Romanoffs might be restored. But that is no longer within the realm of practical politics. Doubtless the Soviet Government does not represent the Russian People in a constitutional sense. But it is the *de facto* Government. While just as there is no restoration to be anticipated from outside so there is no immediate prospect of any proper constitutional development from within. What is much more probable is that the present régime, after some dissension between its two extreme elements, will adapt itself to the needs of the country and will continue to retain the actual power.

During recent months the scission between Lenin and the Extremists has become more pronounced. Lenin's actions seem to show that he has deserted the principles of absolute communism. In a private letter which was published in August, 1921, by *La Vie Russe*, the authenticity of which has not been denied, he explicitly admits the errors and the impracticability of the views he formerly held. But the failure of his theories has

doubtless sapped his energy; and it is improbable that he will have the same driving force in leading any reaction.

The famine may well have no political effect other than eliminating the Extremist opponents of Lenin and Krassin, and possibly of indirectly paving the way to the revival of relations with the outside world.

In the interval time is running against the interests of France. It is still to the advantage of the Soviet Government to enter into commercial relations with the French Republic. But it is less essential than when M. Krassin recognised its preponderating importance in June, 1920, and wished to obtain M. Millerand's consideration for certain proposals. It is less essential because the British Government has already made a treaty with Russia, because other Governments are on the verge of doing so, and because each of these arrangements is an additional assurance that France must sooner or later do likewise in order to protect herself. But the later France agrees to negotiate the less chance she has of imposing terms and conditions.[77]

CHAPTER XII.

The Treaty of Versailles.

Napoleon once said: “Vaincre n’est rien; il faut profiter du succès.” What has happened since the Armistice illustrates the truth of that remark.

Throughout the war there were in various countries clashes between the military and political powers. Upon more than one occasion, in more than one instance, each thought—and sometimes said—that the other was limited in conception and unintelligent in execution. This was simply a repetition of the dispute which always occurs, and which always will occur, when a country having parliamentary institutions goes to war. The exact balance of indispensability and usefulness between generals and statesmen will never be struck. The one undeniable fact is that in the last analysis no war can be won without the man at the Front who bears the brunt of the battle.

But, since the Armistice, the politicians have had a free hand. They certainly have not made the most out of what the soldiers won. In their three years of talking they have even sometimes imperilled what was so hardly conquered by four years of fighting.

In any attempt to fix responsibility one is faced by three primary questions. Was the Armistice granted at the proper time, and did its conditions sufficiently safeguard the victory? Does the main fault for the present situation lie at the door of the

makers of the Treaty of Versailles? Or, in the alternative, is it those charged with the execution of that Treaty who are to blame?

The first point can be disposed of summarily and conclusively. This has already been done by more than one published statement. But, in view of an absurd legend which has found many adherents, the truth cannot be too widely spread.

On October 25th, 1918, Maréchal Foch (to whom the Allied War Council had referred the whole question) asked Pétain, Haig, and Pershing to meet him at Senlis, and to express their views. Haig, who spoke first, thought that the chief consideration was to draft terms so moderate that the Germans would be certain to accept them. In his opinion the Allied Armies were out of breath, the military power of Germany was not broken, and it was therefore desirable not to miss this chance to end the combat. He suggested that it would suffice if the main conditions were the evacuation of Belgium, the invaded parts of France, and Alsace-Lorraine.

Pétain had an entirely different idea of what the armistice should be. His proposal was that the German troops should retire to Germany without taking with them a single cannon or any war material except the arms they carried; while he thought it essential that the Allied Armies should occupy both the left bank of the Rhine and a zone of fifty kilometres on the right bank.

Pershing agreed with Pétain.[78]

Foch did not then intimate that he had arrived at any decision, but on the following day he sent M. Clemenceau a concise memorandum embodying the terms which he believed to

be necessary. Briefly, it may be said that his plan, while going further than that of Haig, was not quite so stringent as that put forward by Pétain; the main difference being that it did not require that all the German artillery should be abandoned.

Some days later (October 27th to 31st) this memorandum was considered by the representatives of the Allied Powers and of the United States. In the course of these conferences Foch was asked directly by Colonel House whether, as a soldier, he would prefer that Germany should accept or refuse the terms offered. Foch answered: "War is waged only in order to obtain results. If the Germans sign the Armistice upon which we have decided, we shall have got those results. The end being attained, no one has the right to cause a single drop more of blood to be shed."

While later, in reply to another query, Maréchal Foch said: "The conditions proposed by your military advisers are the same which we ought, and should be able, to impose after the success of our next operations. Therefore, if the Germans accept them now, it is useless to continue the battle."

It is thus beyond question that it was upon the advice of Maréchal Foch that the struggle was not prolonged, and that the conditions of the armistice were those which he himself proposed.[79]

It is true that later Foch disagreed bitterly with M. Clemenceau about certain clauses of the Treaty. But that dissension (to which I shall refer hereafter) had nothing to do with the Armistice, for which Foch is primarily responsible. It would be futile, upon a military question, to seek to go behind the high authority of the Commander of the Allied Forces, or to place in doubt the wisdom of an arrangement in favour of which

he pronounced in such categoric terms. But it is worth remembering that M. Poincaré was amongst those who always held the opinion that an armistice should not be granted before a final and decisive victory. Early in October the outline of the proposals which Foch then had in mind (they were probably less severe than those he finally suggested) were communicated to the President of the Republic. The latter thought that they were so far from covering what the Allies had a right to exact that he strongly urged this view upon M. Clemenceau in a conversation which took place on October 12th or 13th. A day or two later he repeated his objections in a letter to Clemenceau, protesting against an armistice which would "couper les jarrets de nos soldats." M. Poincaré was in the habit of writing frequently and at great length to the various Prime Ministers who held office during the war. As a rule, M. Clemenceau never answered these letters. But on this occasion he did so with some acidity; expressed his astonishment that the President did not realise that the Cabinet, being alone responsible, had the sole right to decide as it saw fit; and threatened to resign if he was troubled with further interventions of the same nature.

It may be added that this view of the respective rights of the Executive and the Cabinet under the Constitution is not universally acknowledged in France.

Any criticism of the Peace Conference must be premised by admitting that it was confronted by a task of stupendous difficulty. From the outset it must have been apparent to all (except, perhaps, to President Wilson) that no result could possibly satisfy all the nations interested. The very fact that in every country there is a strong body of public opinion dissatisfied with the Treaty, a feeling that its representatives

were over-reached by those of other countries, is the surest sign that, if the Treaty is not perfect, at least it is not unjust and one-sided.

The truth is that not one of the Four constantly got the better of his colleagues. As Clemenceau once remarked, the Conference showed each of them that they were more English, more French, more Italian, or more American than they had themselves thought. In brief, that national feeling was as strongly implanted as ever in the human breast.

Upon the whole, it may be said that Clemenceau got what he could, Lloyd George got practically all he wanted, while Wilson sacrificed everything—including the immediate future of Europe—to his obstinate resolution to have the Covenant of the League of Nations incorporated as part of the Treaty. It would, indeed, have been much better for the whole world had the United States made more material demands (as it could fairly have done) in compensation for the part it had taken in the war. President Wilson would then, in the game of give and take, have been obliged to face practical questions in a practical way.

By personally participating in the Conference, Wilson flouted the advice of some of those whose duty it was to counsel him, as well as the judgment of many other people. The view held by Colonel House is not yet generally known. But it would not be surprising if that discreet man thought from the very beginning that Wilson would have more power if he stayed in Washington, and knew from the very beginning that it would be useless to urge that course.

Woodrow Wilson has spent most of his life as a schoolmaster or as a professor. He is not a scholarly man according to the meaning which in Europe is generally given to

that phrase. Mr. Keynes is quite accurate in his comment on that point. But he has all the characteristics of those who follow a calling in which, day in and day out, they can lay down the law to others who have no right of appeal: a schoolmaster.

This was illustrated in a curious manner soon after Wilson became President. Theodore Roosevelt had a hold on his country which Wilson never obtained. If Roosevelt fell ill—or when, for instance, an attempt was made to assassinate him during a political campaign—the daily state of his health was a question of national concern. When Wilson broke down during his tour to persuade the country to support what he had done in Paris, the general indifference amounted almost to brutality. Nevertheless, Roosevelt, with his great courage and his immense popularity, was never, upon domestic questions, able to control his own party as did Wilson. Time and again Roosevelt had to make concessions to those powerful personages known in America as "Party bosses." It was partly because he finally decided to put up with that system no longer that he made the ill-advised attempt to form a third party, and thus delivered himself into the hands of his political foes.

But Wilson adopted, and with great success, the system of the schoolmaster. The last step which a headmaster takes with a refractory boy is to write to his parents. Wilson inaugurated the custom of going himself to Congress when he wished to get something done, and of announcing his intentions and his reasons to the assembled legislators. An hour later his words were published throughout the length and breadth of the country. From that moment senators and congressmen were put on the defensive to explain to their constituents their opposition to the President. The case rested pretty well upon its merits. There was little room for the back-stairs methods of professional

politicians. Wilson's public statements at the Capitol had a more powerful effect than any number of private conferences at the White House.

But this practice, like all others, had its limits of usefulness. Mr. Wilson made the vital mistake of trying to apply it in his intercourse with other nations: forgetting that all the world did not accept him as its head master; and ignoring that those with whom he was negotiating were not dishonest or tricky political bosses, but men inspired by as high a patriotism as his own, while possessed of a much more profound knowledge of the conduct of foreign affairs.

Unfortunately Mr. Wilson not only failed to recognize this fact; he also lost all sense of proportion. M. Stéphane Lauzanne has published the account of an interview, which, before coming to Europe, Mr. Wilson gave in Washington to a number of foreign journalists. At the time it was communicated only to the Allied Governments. It fully bears out the suggestion made above. The President of the United States talked as if he were the dictator of the universe. M. Lauzanne seems to have suspected that it presaged a physical or mental collapse. But a more public and more lamentable exhibition of the same nature was given some months later when Wilson outraged all decency by presuming to address the Italian people over the heads of its own Government. All this was perhaps the natural development of a man who had always been intellectually arrogant; who never took kindly to opposition or even criticism; who, for many years, as a schoolmaster or professor, had, to a large extent, been exempt from either; and who was suddenly placed in a position where he wielded more power than had anyone in modern history.

Colonel House's opinion about the measure of sagacity shown by Mr. Wilson in going to Paris may possibly never be known. But Mr. Robert Lansing, who was Secretary of State in Mr. Wilson's Cabinet, and also one of the five American plenipotentiaries to the Peace Conference, has told the world that he foresaw the difficulties that might arise, and that he advised the President to stay in Washington.

Mr. Lansing's book throws a curious but not an unexpected light upon the way Mr. Wilson treated the other American Commissioners. None of them, except Colonel House, ever knew fully what was taking place. Wilson acted without telling Lansing (who, as Secretary of State, was to some extent equivalent to Minister of Foreign Affairs)[80] of what he intended to do; any more than he communicated to him what he had done. Moreover, when Lansing, from time to time, wrote, urging his views on some important question, his letters generally remained without even an acknowledgment. On December 23rd, 1918, Lansing sent the President a long letter, enclosing various memoranda regarding "The Power of Guaranty proposed for the League of Nations." The letter was marked "Secret and Urgent." "But," writes Mr. Lansing, "I never received a reply or even an acknowledgment." Lansing rather maliciously suggests that this failure was because Wilson's "Visits to Royalty exacted from him so much of his time that there was no opportunity to give the matter consideration." It seems, however, to have been Wilson's habit to ignore any letter from his advisers if they in any way presumed to differ from him. In January, 1919, Lansing again wrote, urging a certain policy. This letter also "was never answered or acknowledged, and he did not act upon the suggestion or discuss it, to my knowledge, with any of his

colleagues."

On February 3rd, 1919, Mr. Lansing wrote to the President respecting the tribunals to be established under the League of Nations. This was a purely legal question, upon which Lansing's opinion was obviously of some value, not only because he was a distinguished jurist (while Mr. Wilson was a lawyer in name only), but because he had taken part in the proceedings of five international courts of arbitration. Nevertheless, this letter shared the fate of the others. "No acknowledgment, either written or oral, was ever made of my letter of February 3rd."

Wilson's self-sufficiency led him into the mistake of choosing for his colleagues as plenipotentiaries men whom he could over-rule or ignore. He made equally grave errors in selecting his other advisers. The lamentable impression made in Paris by those who seemed nearest to the President persists to this day. Writing in *Le Matin* in July, 1921, M. Stéphane Lauzanne (whose acquaintance with American politics and politicians covers more than a generation) said: "Wilson was an honest man; and if his mind was hazy it did not lack a sense of justice. But beside him were his partners; and behind him were the disturbing shadows of a Warburg, an international financier; of a Baruch, boaster and frivolous; of a Tumulty, bustling and pleasure-loving; of a Creel, ignorant and vulgar"; and he compared these men, to their disadvantage, to Hughes, Harvey and Lodge, who, to-day, surround Harding.

In the first of his famous "Fourteen Points," Mr. Wilson had laid down as essential to the world's welfare, "Open covenants of peace openly arrived at." M. André Tardieu, who, throughout his account of the Peace Conference, is scrupulously fair, and even generous, in his comments on Mr. Wilson, says that the

latter explained that he had not meant public negotiations, but only public debates upon all decisions arrived at before they should become final. Although this does not seem to be quite in accordance with Mr. Wilson's earlier declaration, it was a wise and practical reserve. But in reality the President seems to have concealed his own negotiations even from the majority of his colleagues. Mr. Lansing relates that "The American Commissioners, other than Colonel House, were kept in almost complete ignorance of the preliminary negotiations (he is referring to the League of Nations), and were left to gather such information as they were able from the delegates of other Powers, who, naturally assuming that the Americans possessed the whole confidence of the President, spoke with much freedom. . . . But in addition to the embarrassment caused the American Commissioners, and the unenviable position in which they were placed by the secrecy by which the President surrounded his intercourse with foreign statesmen, and the proceedings of the Commission on the League of Nations, his secret negotiations caused the majority of the delegates to the Conference, and the public at large, to lose in a large measure their confidence in the actuality of his devotion to 'open diplomacy' which he had so unconditionally proclaimed in the first of his 'Fourteen Points.'"

Another dangerous phrase which Wilson had coined or had adopted as his own, was "self-determination." He had even gone so far as to state at a joint session of the Senate and the House of Representatives on February 11th, 1918, that "Self-determination is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of action which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril."

Mr. Wilson, who is the author of a history of the United States, should have remembered that his own country, in four

years of the most desperate civil war which the world has ever seen, denied that right.

Nevertheless, in Article III. of his original draft of the Covenant of the League of Nations, Wilson inserted these words. But they are not to be found in the revised Article VII. (which took the place of Article III.), which he submitted to the Commission on the League of Nations; or in the corresponding Article X. in the Treaty of Versailles. Mr. Lansing suggests that the elimination was due to opposition on the part of Mr. Lloyd George and some of his colleagues.[81]

Be that as it may, Mr. Wilson had other opportunities of showing his belief in that "Imperative principle of action which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril." Nevertheless, the Treaty which he signed denied the right of Austria to form any political union with Germany, in obvious contradiction to Wilson's perilous doctrine of self-determination. I pass over the notorious case of Fiume. But the Shantung Settlement deserves notice, both because Mr. Wilson acquiesced in it, despite the outspoken protest of three of his four colleagues; and also because Mr. Lansing states that Wilson did so solely because he thought that otherwise Japan would not adhere to the League of Nations.

To the justice or necessity of the Shantung decision itself I do not propose to refer further than to say that, while it may be supported on several grounds, no one can possibly contend that it is consistent with any theory of self-determination; and to note that the immediate result was that China protested in the only dignified way open to her—by refusing to be a party the Treaty of Versailles.

On this occasion it was General Bliss who wrote to the

President. He stated that in doing so he was also expressing the opinions of Mr. Lansing and of Mr. Henry White; in other words, the views of three of the five American plenipotentiaries. General Bliss apparently chose his words with the single object of making his meaning abundantly clear to the President. The conclusion of his letter, which follows a sustained argument, is worth quoting:

> "If it be right for a policeman who recovers your purse to keep the contents and claim that he has fulfilled his duty in returning the empty purse, then Japan's conduct may be tolerated.
>
> "If it be right for Japan to annex the territory of an ally, then it cannot be wrong for Italy to retain Fiume taken from the enemy.
>
> "It can't be right to do wrong, even to make peace. Peace is desirable, but there are things dearer than peace—justice and freedom."

The last sentiment is curiously reminiscent of some of President Wilson's own speeches. But his actions were based upon other considerations. Mr. Lansing says that the President actually sent a letter to a member of the Chinese Delegation regretting that he had been unable to do more for China, and saying that he had been compelled to accede to Japan's demands in order to save the League of Nations.

Mr. Wilson got his League of Nations as he wanted it: as part of the Treaty of Versailles. He made good his threat that he would weld them together in such a manner that his political opponents would be unable to accept the Treaty and reject the League. But in so doing he proved that his colossal egotism had obscured any talent he may ever have had as a political

tactician. He knew that his party was in a minority in both Houses of Congress. The Democrats had been defeated in November, 1918, probably because almost on the eve of the election the President had been so ill-advised as to issue a letter to the American people in which he practically asserted that it would be unpatriotic to support the Republican candidates. Wilson, unlike Roosevelt, never had any personal following or influence in the United States: and this unwarranted suggestion turned the floating vote against his own party.

Knowing that any treaty he brought back from Paris could only be confirmed provided it was supported by his political adversaries, elementary prudence would have suggested taking them into counsel and making them partly responsible for whatever was done at the Peace Conference. But Mr. Wilson ignored the leaders of public opinion who were not of his own party and who could not be trusted to act as his instruments.[82] He blindly relied upon forcing the legislature to ratify whatever he did. He went further. In a speech made in New York prior to his departure for France, he publicly threatened to compel the Republican majority to accept the Covenant of the League of Nations in the way above indicated—by making it part of the Treaty of Peace. Presumably he relied upon rousing public opinion to such an extent that Congress would not dare to disavow what the President of the country had done in Paris. In his fatuity he seems never to have imagined that the result of his manœuvre would be the rejection of the Treaty itself, and that the Senate would have the country behind it in refusing ratification. Probably this fact first dawned upon the unfortunate man when he saw what little success he was achieving in the tour he took upon his return from Paris—the tour which ended so tragically.

President Wilson's part in the Peace Conference may be summed up by saying that he was responsible for between two and three months being wasted in drafting, out of its time, a document which was rejected by his own country, thus leading to complications which might have been avoided had Congress ratified the Treaty itself. To achieve that end Mr. Wilson sacrificed his own principles and the interests of the civilised world.

Clemenceau got all he could for his country, yet finally he was not able to procure in the degree desired the two things which France most needed—military security and financial relief. The case for both seemed clear and overwhelming. But the interests involved were too conflicting. Probably no one else would have obtained so much as did M. Clemenceau. While it is likely that, had either he or M. Tardieu been in power, they would have made their own handiwork more productive than have their successors during the past two or three years.

In respect to military security M. Clemenceau demanded the permanent occupation of the left bank of the Rhine. To this both Mr. Lloyd George and President Wilson were opposed. They suggested, as an alternative, treaties between France on the one side, and Great Britain and the United States respectively on the other, whereby the latter countries agreed to bring military assistance to the former in the event of German aggression. M. Clemenceau took some time to consider the proposal. Finally, in exchange for the promise of these treaties, he agreed that the occupation should be limited to fifteen years. As such treaties could only be effective if and when ratified by Parliament and Congress, it was provided that the obligation of either country should not become effective unless the other likewise agreed to

a similar treaty.

But, during this Conference, Maréchal Foch had, at the instance of M. Clemenceau, submitted his views to the "Four." Foch read a report of which the conclusion was that, without permanent occupation, there was no certainty of disarmament; and that the Rhine was the indispensable barrier for the safety of Western Europe, and, consequently, for the safety of civilisation.

When Clemenceau compromised upon an occupation of fifteen years (the area being diminished after each five years), Foch repeated his objections, first to the French Government,[83] and later, on May 6th, 1919 (24 hours before the Treaty was handed to the Germans), to the full Conference. He made it clear that what he demanded was the occupation of the Rhine, "From Cologne to Coblence, and to Mayence, and not of the Pays Rhénans." To some extent he based his argument upon economic grounds. This has given M. Tardieu the opportunity to retort that subsequent experience has proved that military occupation is not efficacious for obtaining payment. But, nevertheless, the fact remains that Foch insisted that, from the purely military standpoint, permanent occupation, or a relatively independent "buffer" State, was necessary for the safety of France and Belgium. The authority of Maréchal Foch upon economic matters may be questioned. It is otherwise when he speaks of military necessities. But his advice, which was accepted for the armistice, was rejected in regard to the Treaty.[84]

Upon the whole I do not think that M. Tardieu's comments upon the facts, as he himself states them, throw a fair light upon this subject.

When Germany asked for an armistice, Foch, as the supreme commander and military adviser of all the Allied and

Associated Powers on the Western Front, was asked to draft the terms. He took full responsibility for doing so; and did not hesitate to bind himself without reservation of any kind whatever. To-day, when there are suggestions that the contest should have been prolonged, that Germany should have been driven further back, M. Tardieu and other political friends of M. Clemenceau cover themselves by referring to Foch's considered decision.

When the question of the occupation of the Rhine was discussed Foch was still the military adviser of the Allies. It was in that capacity that M. Clemenceau (as stated above) called him before the "Four" to give his views: views which Foch (at his own instance, I believe) repeated very forcibly before the whole Conference.[85] M. Tardieu might well have made the point that, upon a matter affecting in varying degree all the Allies, the opinion of their military adviser was ignored. He might have done so with all the more reason because the long memorandum which he himself made early in 1919, and which served as the basis for the whole discussion at the Conference, was (as he admits) the direct result of a note submitted by Foch to Clemenceau on November 27th, 1918, the conclusions of which the latter had at that time decided to support.

Tardieu's memorandum dwelt particularly upon the insufficiency of any guarantees resulting from the limitation of the military forces of Germany, or the authority of the League of Nations. He himself concluded that it was military occupation, and military occupation only, which could afford the necessary security against German aggression at some future time. There was then no question of occupation for fifteen years or any other limited period. According to M. Tardieu (M. Tardieu early in 1919), nothing except the fixing of the German frontier at the

Rhine, and the holding of the Rhine bridges by Allied forces, would mean safety for France and Belgium—and, eventually, for the other Allies.

At first sight one is inclined to regard M. Tardieu's memorandum (fortified by the opinion of Marshal Foch) as conclusive: and none the less because there is much to be said for the contention that, in the event of another war with Germany, the British frontier would practically be at the Rhine rather than at Dover. But it is rather disturbing, after having powerful arguments, to read that while, early in 1919, he was certain that permanent occupation was a necessity, yet that he does not frankly admit that what was finally agreed upon was, according to his own thesis, a virtual denial of security for the future: that security which throughout the war France had contended was an essential condition of Peace.

M. Tardieu intimates that to press the matter further would have been to break the Entente, and possibly to disrupt the Conference itself. "Il était impossible d'aller plus loin."

That is doubtless true. But he would probably have been wise to rest his case upon that admission.

Few will contend that what M. Clemenceau, seconded by M. Tardieu and M. Loucheur, was unable to obtain, anyone else would have been likely to get. But that does not affect the main fact. If M. Tardieu was sincere in his memorandum, then, according to his own view, the Treaty does not properly secure France from a future German attack.

M. Tardieu only confuses the issue by controverting[86] the accuracy of Maréchal Foch's remark: "Occupons la rive gauche et nous serons payés."

Foch might have been wrong on this point, although it is worth noting that M. Poincaré has expressed his regret that no direct relation has been established between the occupation of the Rhine and the payment of the German debt—a relation similar to that established when, after 1870, General de Manteuffel had his headquarters at Nancy.

In any event, Foch's duties were those of a military adviser, and not of an economic expert. His counsel respecting the military aspect of the question was given clearly. It was adopted and expanded by M. Tardieu; and it would have been more useful to have had M. Tardieu's opinion about the advice having been rejected than his comments upon Foch's view of occupation as a means of forcing payment.[87]

Certainly M. Clemenceau and his French colleagues did not attach sufficient importance to the probability of the Treaty not being ratified by Congress. That appears clearly from M. Tardieu's own statement to the Chambre des Députés on September 2nd, 1919:

> "La question qui se pose à vous, après s'être posée à nous, est aussi simple qu'elle est grave. Elle se pose dans une seule formule que je vais mettre devant vos yeux, et sur laquelle de même que le Gouvernement a décidé, vous aurez dans quelques jours à décider aussi. Cette question, la voici: laquelle des deux solutions suivantes valait le mieux pour la France? Ou bien l'occupation d'une rive gauche du Rhin séparée de l'Allemagne pour une durée non définie, mais avec nos seuls moyens, mais sous notre propre responsabilité, mais dans une position d'isolement politique et

> militaire en face d'un pays toujours plus peuplé que le nôtre, mais aussi sans droit contractuel de vérifier ce qui se passait en Allemagne au point de vue militaire: mais enfin et surtout malgré les objections formelles de la Grande Bretagne et des Etats Unis; ou bien, l'occupation de cette même rive gauche qui demeure allemande dans les conditions qui définit le traité, mais avec le droit de prolonger l'occupation et de réoccuper, mais aussi avec la destruction des fortresses Rhénanes et la neutralisation de la rive gauche de 50 kilometres sur la rive droit, mais aussi avec le droit d'investigation, mais aussi avec la participation de nos Alliés à l'occupation Rhénane, mais enfin et surtout avec l'engagement d'aide militaire immêdiate de la Grande Bretagne et des Etats Unis?"

This succinct statement proves clearly that either M. Tardieu did not take into account the possibility of the treaties being rejected by the United States (thus causing the alliance with Great Britain also to fall to the ground); or that he consciously did not place the matter fairly before the Chambre. The latter hypothesis is of course untenable. There remains, therefore, no doubt that the repudiation of the treaties by Congress was not seriously considered. Otherwise, would M. Tardieu have dared to direct the attention of the Chambre "Enfin et surtout" to the military engagements of Great Britain and France, without drawing attention to the fact that, in the event of such rejection, France would be in the position of having irrevocably surrendered her claim to permanent occupation without getting any guarantee of assistance if attacked?

Moreover, when M. Barthou, the rapporteur général of the Treaty, said: “Le Gouvernement français . . . a apporté à la France des garanties solides. Peut-on nier la force importante qu’elles representent? Elles se complément les unes les autres,” he was undoubtedly referring mainly to those military engagements which rested upon so flimsy a fabric. Indeed, M. Tardieu himself, elsewhere in his book,[88] states explicitly that it was “En échange de ce double engagement” (the military assistance of Great Britain and the United States) that M. Clemenceau yielded on his contention that the German frontier should be at the Rhine.

But if there could be any doubt, it is dispelled by the way in which M. Clemenceau himself posed the essential question. Speaking in the Chambre des Députés on September 24th, 1919, he said, referring to the treaty of guarantee: “If the United States does not vote for it, if England had not voted for it, if nobody votes for it, then there will be nothing; that is understood, and the vote which you will have given will be null.”

It is, therefore, clear that M. Clemenceau fully realised the effect of non-ratification by Congress. But he never thought there was any prospect of the treaty being rejected. That is the best excuse which can be made for him.

In brief, M. Clemenceau gave up something definitely in exchange for the chance of getting something. The arrangement would have been what M. Tardieu seeks to make out that it is had the Treaty provided that the German frontier should be the Rhine unless the British and American legislatures ratified the Treaties. I do not suggest that that course would have been feasible, but simply am illustrating the inexactitude of M. Tardieu’s statement.

M. Tardieu says that the possibility of President Wilson not being supported by Congress was considered. He protests that no course was open other than to treat with Wilson. Undoubtedly that was so. But as, according to M. Tardieu's own contention, the proposed Treaties were of such importance that their offer had the effect of reducing the French demand for permanent occupation to one for occupation for a period of fifteen years, against the advice of their principal military adviser, one would have thought that the chances of Mr. Wilson being supported or otherwise would have been carefully scrutinized. For, although undoubtedly the Treaties would have been a source of security to France, yet, as shown above, they were offered on condition that France's first claim for security —permanent occupation—should be abandoned.

Moreover, if Mr. Wilson had been warned that he ran a risk of not having his work adopted by the Senate, the British and French Governments also were not unaware of the position. M. Tardieu admits it. He asks what else the French plenipotentiaries could have done. The point at issue is plain. It is simply whether or not they staked too much upon the chance of getting something else. If it was to be done over again, would M. Tardieu waive all claim to any occupation beyond fifteen years if there was to be no defensive guarantee on the part of Great Britain and the United States? If the answer is "Yes," then the French representatives got what they wanted (although it is not what Foch thinks is necessary for safety), and took a legitimate gamble upon the prospect of getting some further security. If the answer is "No," then they risked too much upon a chance.

My own conviction, based upon various conversations which took place at that period, is that, whatever M. Tardieu

himself might have thought, the belief prevalent amongst both French and English statesmen was that Mr. Wilson would obtain ratification of the Treaty. They appeared to attach little importance to the fact that the American Senate had on prior occasions rejected treaties signed by American plenipotentiaries. Nor were their views greatly influenced by the knowledge that Wilson was faced by a hostile majority, which he had done nothing to conciliate and had, indeed, further antagonised. They never seemed fully to understand what Roosevelt made clear in a statement published shortly before his death: that the President, though a vehicle of negotiation, was only half the treaty-making power, and could bind nobody except himself. The situation was the same as if King George personally signed a treaty which he had every reason to know would be opposed by Mr. Lloyd George and his majority if it was submitted to the House of Commons.

M. Tardieu relates that the possibility of non-ratification was discussed with President Wilson, and that, as a result, Article 429 of the Treaty of Versailles was changed. Basing his contention upon the final paragraph of that article, he says that there is now a full guarantee. The paragraph reads as follows: "Si à ce moment (au bout de 15 ans), les garanties contre une agression non provoquée de l'Allemagne n'étaient pas considerées suffisantes par les Gouvernements Alliés et Associés, l'evacuation des troupes d'occupation pourrait être retardée dans le mesure jugée nécessaire à l'obtenir des dites garanties."

M. Tardieu argues that one of the cases in which the guarantees would be considered insufficient in 1935 would be if the guarantee treaties between France and Great Britain and the United States was then non-existent. He contends that in that

event, even if Germany had fulfilled her financial obligations, the occupation might be postponed until those treaties were ratified, or some equivalent treaty was given.

M. Tardieu must necessarily know what this Article was meant to convey. For every reason I should like to be able to read it as he interprets it. However, the paragraph states that the prolongation of the occupation is to be dependent upon the decision of the Allied and Associated Governments.

The year 1935 is a long way ahead. Surely what M. Tardieu sees in 1922 is not of a nature to reassure him that he can count with any certainty upon Great Britain and the United States agreeing to such occupation thirteen years hence.

Since the above lines were written, M. Tardieu has asserted in a letter to *Le Temps* (September 13th, 1921) that France's right to continue the occupation after the fifteen years would not be affected even if the other Allies withdrew. Certainly neither the French nor the English version seems to bear that construction.[89]

M. Tardieu also laid stress on the fact that no Ally had raised any objection to the interpretation which he had publicly given of this article, both in his book and elsewhere. But that seems to be begging the question. The Allied Governments are not in the habit of replying to statements made by those who no longer hold any official position. Nor do they go forward to meet difficulties. France has several rights under the Treaty which were not denied, but which were not fulfilled when the proper time arrived. In any event, the negotiations were unnecessarily prolonged if one negotiator is to-day sincerely satisfied when he contemplates the possibility of French troops occupying this territory, in disaccord with their former Allies,

but without being forcibly ousted by them.

Regarding the payments to be made by Germany under the Treaty, it is certain that they will not give France all she hoped. It is almost equally certain that they will not provide what France has a right to expect. While the defaults already made by Germany have aggravated the situation.

Unfortunately, some members of the French Government had led the country to believe that German payments would relieve the financial strain almost immediately. In this respect M. Klotz, who was then Minister of Finance, was particularly to blame. In one speech he held out the hope that France alone would eventually obtain at least 400 milliards of francs from Germany. It is worth recalling that it was to M. Klotz that Maréchal Foch, immediately after the Treaty was signed at Versailles, said: "Monsieur le ministre des finances de la République française, avec un pareil traité, vous pourrez vous présenter aux guichets de l'empire allemand, et vous serez payé—en monnaie de singe."

It is true that Mr. Lloyd George had also said: "Germany will pay for everything," but with the British Prime Minister that was mainly an election cry, for at the Conference the same Lloyd George did not hesitate to protest against exacting from Germany the payments which the French plenipotentiaries wanted. It is curious to reflect that one of his arguments was that excessive demands might result in throwing Germany into the arms of the Bolshevists, and thus increasing the power of the latter. While later he himself paid no heed to the French contention that Great Britain would increase the prestige of the Soviet Government by making a commercial treaty with it.[90]

Throughout the Conference the French representatives held

firmly to one idea: they did not want the total of the German debt to be fixed then. In their opinion it was impossible to arrive at any fairly approximate figure without investigations, which would take many months. They gained their point, and the Treaty provided that the Reparations Commission should settle the amount before May 1st, 1921.

The French view was probably sound in theory. But it was apparent throughout the Conference that it was only by a daily struggle that France could get even part of what she asked. M. Tardieu has put it on record that France was the great sufferer from Mr. Lloyd George's contradictions. Moreover, what was won one week was often imperilled the next. Thus, after the British Prime Minister had agreed to the occupation of German territory for fifteen years, he subsequently (when Germany had presented her objections) changed his mind, and, supported by Mr. Bonar Law and Mr. Barnes, wished to re-open the whole question.[91]

It was only because M. Clemenceau held firm for three weeks, stating boldly that he would not agree to any change in the decision already arrived at after the fullest discussion, that Mr. Lloyd George and his colleagues finally yielded. But these experiences ought to have taught the French plenipotentiaries to settle matters once and for all, and, so far as possible, to avoid the necessity of future debates with their Allies. If the latter were not easy to convince in 1919, there was no reason to suppose that they would become more so as their own interests under the Treaty were satisfied. This consideration applied with particular force to the payments to be made by Germany. For, although the exact division between the Allies was not fixed until some months later, it was always understood that the larger share would naturally fall to France.[92]

Thus, although it would certainly have been difficult to have settled the German indebtedness at the time the Treaty was signed, France probably lost more (and certainly ran a great risk of losing more) by leaving the question open than by accepting, and having stated in the Treaty, a figure which doubtless would have been inaccurate. It was one of the points in regard to which M. Clemenceau got his way, thanks to his strength of will and his consummate patience. Mr. Wilson, who had to be won over, said that he was in favour of the amount being named at once, not because he wished to make any concession to Germany, but only because he was advised by the American experts that, for reasons of a practical nature, it was better to settle it immediately. Subsequent events may be said to have confirmed that view.

It is fair to add that neither M. Clemenceau nor M. Tardieu nor M. Loucheur foresaw that the Reparations Commission would become a body which the politicians in power would oust or would make use of as might best serve their purpose from time to time.

Finally, the transcendent fault of the makers of the Treaty was not to include therein unambiguous and sufficient penalties for its infraction. M. Tardieu, in articles of singular force and lucidity,[93] has protested with his usual vigour against the constant breach of the pact of which he was one of the principal makers. He contends that the Treaty does contain proper penalties. It certainly contains none which, in the opinion of successive French Governments, are adequate automatically to enforce the execution of the German obligations. Otherwise there would have been no necessity for any French participation in the various conferences between the Allies, provoked by violations of the Treaty on the part of Germany.

M. Tardieu is entitled to make out the best case he can for himself. Nevertheless, such comments do not come with the best of grace from one who, with his French colleagues, is largely to blame for the fact that the Treaty is incomplete in this respect. It is true that the same reproach might be addressed to all the principal members of the Conference. But it is France who complains most loudly that the terms of the Treaty are not being carried out. It is France who is suffering most to-day from its non-execution. During the Conference her representatives argued time and again that they understood Germans and the German character better than any of the others. M. Clemenceau once said that he did not foresee a peace of kindness with Germany. He seemed to realise that, whatever she might say, whatever she might promise, Germany would react only to coercion. It is inconceivable that, holding that firm conviction, and with the knowledge that any discussion with some of the Allies upon this question meant a contest, the French plenipotentiaries should have left loopholes leading to future conferences, whereby their claims might again be put in jeopardy.

But if it is possible to indicate some points in which the Treaty of Versailles is defective, M. Clemenceau and M. Tardieu can retort that it is those charged with its execution who must bear the greater responsibility for the unsatisfactory position which prevails two years after its signature.

M. Clemenceau gave them warning that the document itself with the signature of Germany alone would not suffice. “Ce texte, si complexe, vaudra parce que vous vaudrez vous mêmes; il sera ce que vous le ferez” were his words.

If I have ventured to indicate certain omissions in the Treaty,

omissions which were obviously bound to give rise to complaints that France was not being fairly compensated or properly protected, I admit that all criticisms of that nature are fully answered by the reply: “We could not get more.” For throughout the Conference M. Clemenceau was determined not to cause a rupture of the Entente or a premature dissolution of the Conference itself. Any full account of the proceedings will show how nearly that occurred on at least two occasions; and will prove that M. Clemenceau went as far as he could without causing an absolute breach. In avoiding that he was doing his best for his country; for, rightly or wrongly, the world would then have pronounced that the French demands were responsible for the collapse.

My slight criticism of M. Tardieu’s book is that he does not rely enough upon this firm ground of the inability of his colleagues and himself to get better terms; and that he is led into the error (a very human one) of magnifying what they did get, and of not throwing a full light upon what they failed to obtain.

The fact is that the Treaty was necessarily the result of concessions on the part of each of the great Powers; concessions sometimes of conflicting interests, often of conflicting views. It was a work produced by months of labour: during which divergences of opinion more than once reached the breaking-point. But throughout, the plenipotentiaries of the Allied and Associated nations kept in view the need of reaching an agreement which they could finally present to Germany as their unanimous decision. When such differences were overcome in order to achieve that end, one would naturally have thought that, having compromised among themselves, they would henceforth have been equally at one in insisting upon a due performance of that compromise by Germany. Unfortunately that has not been the

case.

M. Clemenceau and M. Tardieu may well plead that, had they represented France subsequently to signing the Treaty, they would have derived more from it than did others. Many will assent to this contention. More will admit that it is unfair to render the authors of the Treaty, who had nothing to do with its execution, responsible for the errors of others.

M. Clemenceau and Mr. Wilson both ceased to have any power some months after the Treaty was signed, the former absolutely, the latter to all practical intents and purposes.

But there is one of the principal authors of the Treaty who has taken a part, and a predominant part, in all subsequent negotiations: Mr. Lloyd George. No account of the peripatetic course of the Treaty, no examination of the causes of its comparative failure, would be complete without a full consideration of the attitude of the Prime Minister, both at the Peace Conference and since.

Mr. Keynes's picture of the three chief negotiators, Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and Wilson, will doubtless pass into history when his economic views and predictions have long been forgotten. It is worth recalling here, if only because it lays stress upon Mr. Lloyd George's mental agility and his susceptibility to atmosphere.

M. Clemenceau had principles to which he clung throughout. There was never any doubt in his own mind about what he wanted, and about what his stand would be upon any question. Once he had stated his opinion everyone knew that he would not replace it the next day by another one. Mr. Wilson was generally groping in the dark, and groping slowly and awkwardly, as befitted his caution and mental rigidity. In the meantime, Mr.

Lloyd George had arrived at his conclusion—for the day.

But, apart from Mr. Keynes, there were two delegates to the Peace Conference, both of whom had a fuller and closer opportunity of judging, who have made public their impression of Mr. Lloyd George: Mr. Robert Lansing, and M. André Tardieu.

Mr. Lansing, as one probably far removed from the future conduct of European affairs, has recorded his recollections without reticence. M. Tardieu, doubtless mindful of the fact that he and Mr. Lloyd George may one day again find themselves in conference together, has written with more discretion, but, perhaps, also with more insight.

Mr. Lansing ranks Lloyd George as third in importance and influence amongst those whom he calls the "Big Four," Clemenceau, Lloyd George, Wilson, and Orlando. He thinks that, more than any of the others, the British Prime Minister permitted the Parliamentary situation in his own country to govern his every action. Apart from his steadfastness in seeking fulfilment of his own popular election cries (such as the public trial of the ex-Kaiser), he seemed to have neither fixed principles nor a settled programme. Moreover, once the matters affecting Great Britain were decided, he appeared to think that any other questions were of comparatively slight importance, and that to study them carefully would be a waste of time and energy. His rapid decisions indicated "Alertness rather than a depth of mind . . . his logic, if one can use that word, was that of an opportunist, and was in no way convincing. He was better in attack than on the defence, for the latter exacted a detailed knowledge of all the phases of a question, while in attacking he could choose the ground which suited him best."

In Mr. Lansing's opinion, Lloyd George was a politician rather than a sagacious statesman. "His quickness in though, and speech, and his self-confidence made him what he was, a great Parliamentarian. In certain respects he had talents which resembled those of M. Clemenceau, although the latter seemed to be more stable than his British colleague. In the Conference at Paris these qualities were in no way so efficacious as in the House of Commons or on the political platform. M. Clemenceau judiciously put them on one side. But Mr. Lloyd George could not banish them. Without them he would have been lost. In negotiations conducted by the heads of the Governments and by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Five Great Powers, precise knowledge counted for something, and intellectual weight took the first rank. Without the assistance of Mr. Balfour and the constant advice of his subordinates, Mr. Lloyd George would, I fear, have been positively outclassed."

Above all, Lansing was struck by Lloyd George's desire for secrecy, due to his fear of giving any weapon to his Parliamentary opponents. This was illustrated at a meeting of the Council of Ten, in April, 1919, when the Prime Minister urged that the Treaty should not be shown to the minor states before it was given to the representatives of Germany. In the result, "the delegates of the smaller belligerent nations were not permitted to examine the actual text of the document before it was seen by their defeated adversaries. Nations which had fought valiantly and suffered agonies during the war were treated with less consideration than their enemies so far as knowledge of the exact terms of peace were concerned. The arguments which could be urged on the ground of the practical necessity of a small group dealing with the questions, and determining the settlements,[94] seem insufficient to justify the

application of the rule of secrecy to the delegates who sat in the Conference on the Preliminaries of Peace. It is not too severe to say that it outraged the equal rights of independent and sovereign states, and, under less critical conditions, would have been resented as an insult by the plenipotentiaries of the lesser nations. Even within the delegations of the Great Powers there were indignant murmurings against this indefensible and unheard-of treatment of Allies. No man whose mind was not warped by prejudice or dominated by political expediency could give it his approval or become its apologist."[95]

As has been already stated, Mr. Wilson explained or qualified the first of his Fourteen Points—"Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at" by saying that he had never meant that the negotiations should be public, but only that there should be an opportunity for public debates upon the decisions at which the plenipotentiaries had arrived. But Mr. Lloyd George's proposal that the Treaty should be given to the representatives of Germany before it was shown to the delegates of the smaller nations went much further than anything Mr. Wilson had suggested. For what could be more futile than a Parliamentary debate in a country where no plenipotentiary could say that he had seen the Treaty as a whole before it was handed to Germany? That is the plan which Mr. Lloyd George suggested; that is the plan to which Mr. Wilson assented; and that is what was done.

I am far from being an advocate of open diplomacy as that treacherous term is generally understood. But it is difficult to justify these proceedings. While in view of their previous professions it is strange to find that those responsible for this policy were Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Wilson.

In the meantime M. Clemenceau was wrapped in sardonic contemplation of his English and American colleagues nullifying in private their political utterances. Clemenceau believed that the Great Powers should decide all questions as they thought fit. He had said so boldly at the beginning of the Conference in reply to a protest made by Sir Robert Borden. But he had never compromised himself by any remarks about open diplomacy. On the other hand, if he had not talked in that sense, he had by his actions shown that he dreaded publicity much less than Mr. Lloyd George and criticism much less than Mr. Wilson. One of his first acts upon becoming Prime Minister had in fact been to abolish the censorship in respect to attacks upon himself. However, at the Conference he was obliged to take steps to protect the feelings of his more sensitive and less consistent colleagues.

Mr. Lansing sums up the matter as follows: "The insistence of the British Prime Minister on secrecy was one of the manifestations of that opportunism which distinguished his public career. He did not accept a principle, or showed no disposition to apply it, unless it appeared to lead to some practical advantage for his Government, and if he found his anticipation of the result was wrong he unhesitatingly abandoned the principle and assumed another."

M. Tardieu likewise refers to Mr. Lloyd George's dislike of publicity and his intolerance of criticism. As early as January 15th, 1919, the latter was complaining of the comments in the French Press. While a few weeks later he was threatening to withdraw from the Conference if various newspapers continued to publish certain statements about the proceedings. Fortunately for all concerned M. Clemenceau did not take him at his word.

M. Tardieu, like Mr. Lansing, remarked Mr. Lloyd George's insistence on the punishment of the ex-Kaiser and his accomplices. In eleven sessions (February 3rd to March 29th, 1919) of the Commission on the Question des Coupables, Sir Ernest Pollock maintained, in opposition to the American view, Mr. Lloyd George's contention that those accused should be surrendered for trial by the Allies. The Prime Minister himself, at seven meetings of the Council of Four (April 1st to May 5th, 1919), demanded that the conclusions arrived at by the Commission should be increased in severity. While on June 16th, 1919, his principal secretary, Mr. Philip Kerr, drafted the letter by which, in answer to the protests of Count de Brockdorff-Rantzau, the Allies refused to allow those guilty to be judged by "The accomplices of their crimes."[96]

Nevertheless, a few months later, in February, 1920, Mr. Lloyd George was responsible for the first mutilation of the Treaty when he abandoned the clause which called for these men being handed over to the Allies.

M. Tardieu states that Mr. Lloyd George gave away that for which he had so loudly clamoured because of an adverse by-election won by the Labour party. Whatever the reason, M. Tardieu's experience of the Conference should have habituated him to Mr. Lloyd George's frequent changes and contradictions.

Mr. Lloyd George's almost constant fear was that the Germans would not sign the Treaty. No matter what agreement he had reached with his colleagues, they were never certain that he would not, on that plea, want to reopen the whole discussion. "Under the influence of certain of his associates, such as General Smuts, or after breakfast with a prominent Labour leader, he would arrive at the meeting with a gloomy air,

announcing, ‘They will not sign!’”

This tendency to yield was even more pronounced during the period after the Treaty had been handed to the Germans and their objections began to be presented, from May 25th to June 26th. It is fair to add that, in M. Tardieu’s opinion, these fears were then partly inspired, or were augmented, by the views of some members of his Cabinet. In any event, Mr. Lloyd George was so alarmed at the prospect that Germany might refuse to accept the Treaty that (while excusing himself for doing it so late in the day), he proposed making inadmissible concessions upon every question—disarmament, occupation, reparations, Dantzig, Upper Silesia.[97]

Count de Brockdorff-Rantzau little knew Mr. Lloyd George’s state of mind at the time. I have been told in Germany, by a high authority, that to this day he deplores that ignorance. Nor did the Prime Minister’s subsequent speech in the House of Commons indicate that he had been the one who had lagged behind or that he had ever wavered about imposing what he himself called a stern but a just peace.

It is undeniable that the various mutilations of the Treaty—the serious changes to which the Allies made themselves parties, and also the German defaults which did not call forth any action at the proper time—gave Germany reason to believe that she could with impunity ignore her obligations.

At the worst, it appeared to her that by repudiating her undertakings as they fell due, she could lose nothing, and might possibly gain something; and therefore to that practice she has faithfully adhered.

Without attempting to give a complete list of these

derogations from the Treaty I propose to enumerate a few of the most culpable. The necessity of German disarmament was a subject upon which all the Allies agreed, but obviously it was one of capital importance for France, as she would be unable to reduce her army to the final limits, and to turn her whole attention to the work of recuperation, until she was assured that the fangs of the invader had been drawn.

According to the Treaty of Versailles, Germany should have abandoned to the Allies all arms and war materials, over and above what she was authorised to retain, not later than March 10th, 1920. At that date there was no semblance of any material compliance. Nevertheless, no step was taken to remind Germany of her engagement, or to compel her to execute it. At the Spa Conference, some months later, in July, 1920, it was found that 15,000 guns and more than 9,000 aeroplanes (not to mention considerable quantities of other war material) had not even then been surrendered. A further delay until January 1st, 1921, was granted. But on May 5th, 1921, Mr. Lloyd George told the House of Commons that, although, in the opinion of the Allies, the destruction of the German big guns had been "most satisfactory," it was not yet complete. While the Prime Minister proceeded to admit that "There are still far too many rifles and machine-guns unsurrendered—enough machine-guns to arm very formidable forces."

In respect to the number of men under arms the tale is still more significant. By the Treaty Germany bound herself to reduce her army to 200,000 men of the Reichswehr by April 10th, 1920, and to 100,000 men by May 10th, 1920; and was likewise (in conformity to an Order of the Supreme Council, dated December 1st, 1919) obliged by the latter date to suppress all the camouflaged forces organised by Noske and others.

These engagements were not fulfilled, nor did the Allies do anything practical to enforce observance of the Treaty. Presumably, therefore, no one was surprised to discover, at the Spa Conference in July, 1920, that conscription had not been legally suppressed, and that the hidden forces then numbered 800,000 men. In this instance also the date for performance was extended to January 1st, 1921. The threat was made that if there was then any default in respect either to war material or the men under arms the Ruhr would be occupied "automatically" without further warning.

The appointed day passed. Four months later, on May 5th, 1921, Mr. Lloyd George told the House of Commons that while, since the Spa Conference, the German Army had been reduced from 200,000 to 100,000 men, yet that the situation was still unsatisfactory. In his own words: "Probably the most disquieting factor is that irregular organisations called the Einwohnerwehr and Sicherheitswehr and other names are still in existence in Germany. In Bavaria alone there is a force of 300,000 men called the Einwohnerwehr, a very considerable force in East Prussia, in Wurtemberg, and in other parts of Germany; and these forces added together would no doubt become the nucleus of a most formidable army. They are armed with rifles, they have machine-guns, and it is suspected that they have a number of cannon."

But Mr. Lloyd George's avowal does not tell the whole story. The Bavarian Secretary of State declared publicly in the Landtag that the Bavarian Einwohnerwehr consisted of about 320,000 men, that it had 240,000 rifles, 2,780 machine-guns, and forty-four cannon. There is every reason to believe that these figures were then below the reality. While, in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles and in mocking derision of the Allies,

this force was openly subsidised by the State. For the year 1920-1921 the credit allowed was 15,074,000 marks. The Technische Nothilfe, which is connected with the Einwohnerwehr, received a subsidy of 210,000 marks from the Reich.

The Einwohnerwehr was armed gratuitously by the official organisation charged with the destruction of armaments, the Reichstreuhandgesellschaft. Its members were carefully divided into those who could be mobilised for service abroad, and those who would be useful only in home defence.

This is the bare outline of a plan, each detail of which shows that these forces were meant to be the basis of a military machine for future use, and that it was a deliberate attempt to render abortive one of the most essential provisions of the Treaty. The intent is all the more apparent in view of what happened when Napoleon made a similar attempt to disarm the most treacherously aggressive country known in the history of Europe. His plans were perfect on paper. They exacted that the Prussian Army should not exceed a fixed figure. The order was observed in the letter. But its spirit was evaded by the ingenious device of Scharnhorst, who made soldiers of the whole male population by changing the personnel of the army at short intervals, and thus giving all a brief period of intensive military training. There was, therefore, every reason to imagine that the Germans would again try to elude their engagements, which renders all the more inexplicable the conduct of the Allies since the Treaty was signed.

The desirability of disarming Germany was settled once and for all by the Allies at the Peace Conference. It rests with Mr. Lloyd George and others to explain why they have allowed their

decision to be derided. The situation to-day is, indeed, much more in accord with the disarmament clauses of the Treaty. But, as M. Briand showed at Washington, France has still some ground for alarm about the future. She is left without that security for which throughout the war she steadfastly contended, and which the Treaty of Versailles guaranteed to her. It is idle to pretend that the League of Nations could form any barrier to German desires. Undoubtedly an organisation of that nature was necessary. Everything which makes it more difficult for war suddenly to break out, or which limits the area of any conflict, is so much gained for humanity and for the cause of civilisation. But there is no reason whatever to think that at present the League has any practical power. It might possibly have been otherwise had not Mr. Wilson recoiled from his own words on the day when he could have converted them into deeds. In 1917 the President of the United States said: "There cannot be peace without concession and sacrifices"; and he proceeded to suggest that after the war a force should be created which should be so superior to the forces of all nations and all combinations of nations that the edicts of the international body directing it could never be resisted.

In effect that was a proposal for general disarmament, or for limitation of armaments. Whether such a plan is feasible may be questioned. But what is beyond all question is that without some species of disarmament no League of Nations will ever have a predominant power.

M. Clemenceau, with his usual realisation of the practical, and his delight in the logical, carried Mr. Wilson's idea to its obvious conclusion. He suggested that the verification of armaments should be obligatory, and that military measures should be taken to enforce obedience to the decrees of the super

government which Mr. Wilson had in mind. Possibly Clemenceau was actually in favour of the proposal. I venture to think, however, that he merely wished to place Wilson face to face with the situation which his words created. In any event, the President would not agree.[98]

Later Wilson expressly recognized that the League of Nations, as constituted, gave France no adequate protection. During the discussion regarding the occupation of the Rhine country, to which Wilson was at first opposed, Clemenceau said: "The Pact may be able to guarantee us the victory. But for the moment it is insufficient to guard us against invasion."

The President assented and yielded.

To-day the League of Nations is suffering from the effects of promising too much and accomplishing too little. It has made the average man reflect upon the wisdom of our forefathers, who, more practical if less idealistic, were content to pray "Give peace in our time, O Lord."

The United States has resolutely stood aside. President Harding lost no time in indicating that he saw no solution, except possibly partial disarmament. The American Ambassador to the Court of St. James' was allowed to make it clear in his first public speech that the Administration intended to ignore the League. Mr. Harvey's words left no room for any doubt. "Inevitably and irresistibly our present Government could not, without the betrayal of its creators and masters, and will not, I assure you, have anything whatsoever to do with the League, or with any commission or committee appointed by it or responsible to it, directly or indirectly, openly or furtively."

All those who were in touch with American politics and

with American public feeling confidently predicted that this would be the result when it became apparent, in the autumn of 1919, that the Republican party would probably come into power in 1921. Although some with no knowledge of the United States, and others who thought they had acquired some from having passed a few months at the British Embassy in Washington with Lord Grey, tried to spread the conviction that Washington would rally to the League after the presidential election.

As a consequence of this stand many of the South and Central American republics have begun to treat the Society of Nations with scant respect. They realise that their safety and interest lies in the Monroe doctrine rather than in any universal formula. They look to Washington rather than to Geneva; while some of them have already begun to complain about the burden of contributing to support an institution which is occupied chiefly by the consideration of European questions, and whose decisions would probably be of little binding effect in the Americas.

The primary result has been that the highly-paid officials of the organisation have been obliged to submit to a diminution of their salaries, despite the high rate of exchange which prevails in Switzerland.

Certainly nothing which has happened since 1919 goes to prove that the League of Nations could bar the path to anything Germany wanted to do. It has even been powerless to prevent minor wars in various parts of Europe. Mr. Balfour put the matter in its true light. Speaking in the House of Commons on April 21st, 1921, he said: “The Society of Nations has no arms except universal public opinion.” It may be remarked that public

opinion is rarely universal. But at the best it is not an arm which France considers (or which Mr. Wilson or Mr. Lloyd George considered) a sufficient protection against Germany.

Another vital infringement upon the Treaty was the agreement made at Spa regarding coal. Under the Treaty Germany was obliged to deliver to the Allies 3,500,000 tons per month for six months. At Spa this amount was reduced to 2,000,000 tons. Moreover, the Treaty provided that the price of this coal should be that which was payable at the mine. The Spa agreement increased this price by a fixed amount of five marks gold per ton, plus a variable augmentation, viz., the difference between the price at the mine, plus the five marks added, and the exportation price, f.o.b. to a German or English port.

This difference, according to M. Tardieu (and I see no criticism which can be made of his figures), worked out as follows (of course the value in paper francs of the 5 marks gold varied with the course of the exchange):

British Exportation Price		frs. 240
Domestic German Price	frs. 70.00	
Premium allowed at Spa	frs. 13.75	
	———	83.75
Difference	frs. 156.25 per ton.	

In brief this change in the Treaty involved monthly payments of about 27,500,000 frs. in respect to the fixed increase, and of about 312,500,000 frs. on account of the variable advance allowed in the manner above stated.

Of this amount, by virtue of the proportion of the German coal which was allotted to her, France had to pay 206,000,000 frs.

It was France more than any of the Allies which was adversely affected by this alteration. One of the very objects of these provisions of the Treaty was to compensate and protect a country in which the mines had been systematically destroyed by the invader, and which needed a plentiful supply of coal to re-start industrial life. The same clauses necessarily put France in a favourable position to compete with Great Britain. Neither English nor French Delegates to the Conference ignored that point. But the result of the Spa agreement was to eliminate or diminish that benefit, and to place a handicap upon France. No Englishman can deny that, at the time, the alteration made at Spa appeared to be to the advantage of this country. But also, every fair-minded Englishman must admit that it was an advantage for which France paid the bill; that it was a derogation from the Treaty; that only Germany and England gained by that derogation; and that (leaving aside any higher ideal) it was a gain for which, perhaps, too high a price was paid in view of the temporary ill-feeling which it engendered.

The French Government had been afraid that there would be some attempt to alter the Treaty at the Spa Conference. The following extract from my diary, recounting a conversation I had with M. Millerand soon after his return from San Remo, shows the anxiety on this point of the President du Conseil: "M. Millerand told me that he had been entirely opposed to the Germans being called to Spa, and that eventually he said he would consent only on two conditions: first, that there should be no revision of the Treaty, and, secondly, that the Allies should agree amongst themselves what they should say at each meeting. He said that Lloyd George had first agreed to the conditions, had then said that he would not accept them, but finally did so. Nevertheless, M. Millerand says that before they meet at Spa he

means to get it in black and white from Lloyd George, which is entirely right. His own opinion is that there should be no conversations with the Germans, but that they might be heard, and then any proper use might be made of anything they had to say. That, of course, is the proper view."

I do not propose to recount the story of the meetings at San Remo, at Hythe, at Boulogne; meetings more instructive in lessons than productive in results. Nor the miserable idea of a conversation with the Germans at Geneva, which came to nothing because the French Government wisely and properly refused to have anything to do with it.

These various and varied vacillations upon the part of the Allies may almost be said to form some excuse for the derelictions of Germany. She has been encouraged to think that if this particular Treaty was not a scrap of paper, at least it was something very flimsy. It would be a step backwards if civilised nations ever adopted the barbarous German conception of warfare, or the brutal German method of imposing peace. But a lesson might well be learned from the German system of enforcing the execution of a treaty which has been duly signed by both victor and vanquished. One is thus logically led to inquire what is the basic cause of these changes and concessions, and who is primarily responsible for them.

The Treaty of Versailles was ratified by the legislature of various nations, and especially by the Parliaments of the two countries whose relations to each other I am discussing—Great Britain and France. As the majorities in both these Assemblies pronounced in favour of the Treaty there can now be no suggestion that either country considers it unjust. Moreover, the only complaint which France makes is that the Treaty is not

being executed.

When Mr. Lloyd George placed the Treaty before the House of Commons he claimed that he and his colleagues had done their work faithfully, and had brought their vast task to a creditable conclusion. Presumably, he still holds the same opinion. Otherwise, it would manifestly have been his duty to tell the country through Parliament that he had been mistaken in asserting that the Treaty was a good one and a workable one; and to ask for a mandate to revise it.

A revision (except upon the ground that the Treaty was absolutely unworkable) is open to the practical objection that an equally legitimate demand might be made for a revision of the revised Treaty. Even those who (like myself) concur in Mr. Lloyd George's favourable view of the Treaty of Versailles, taken as a whole, freely admit that, like every human handiwork, it is defective in certain points. But any revision, while satisfying some strictures, would undoubtedly give rise to others. It would certainly be neither perfect nor entirely satisfactory to all the Allies.

But if Mr. Lloyd George has never gone so far to state that he wished to change the work upon which he prided himself in June, 1919, it is equally true that he is largely responsible both for the failure to enforce its provisions, and also for the changes which have actually been made from time to time.

Germany is the country which has derived the most benefit from these alterations, whether by various delays granted or otherwise; while, on the other hand, these modifications have not injured England in anything like the same degree as they have France. I have already referred to the Spa coal agreement. In regard to payments to be made by Germany, although Great

Britain is heavily overtaxed, yet the delay is even more disastrous to France, both because she needs the money for reparations, and also because she receives 52 per cent., while England gets only 22 per cent. of these payments.[99]

Again, the failure of Germany to disarm may be disquieting to some British statesmen. But it neither keeps the country in a state of alarm nor costs the taxpayer a single shilling, whereas France is unable to betake herself to the work of restoration in complete tranquillity, and is also obliged to keep under arms forces superior to her needs if she were given the security guaranteed by the Treaty.

But, if France is no more (and probably less) satisfied than any of the other Allies, the facts are distorted by those who suggest that she is trying to go outside the Treaty, or to obtain anything more than it gives her. All that France demands is that she should get, without undue delay, the compensation, relief, and protection which is guaranteed by the Treaty. All that France asks is that the judgment which was pronounced by the Peace Conference shall not be ignored or repealed where it is in her favour, while it has already been largely executed where it is to the advantage of some of her Allies.

Yet every one of the principal alterations of the Treaty has been either entirely or mainly at the expense of France.

The history of the Peace Conference shows that throughout Mr. Lloyd George was insisting upon the importance to be attached to British public opinion. Time and again he objected to follow a certain course, giving as his reason that the country would be against him; while upon at least one occasion he even sought on the same ground to reverse his decision upon questions of prime importance—the occupation of the Rhine and

reparations.

This is not the place to discuss whether the Prime Minister of a country having parliamentary institutions should stand on fixed principles and try to mould public opinion: or whether he should allow himself to be governed by that opinion in the exercise of his mandate from day to day. It will suffice to say that M. Clemenceau belongs to the former school and Mr. Lloyd George to the latter. But one thing which the British Prime Minister was always at pains to impress upon his colleagues is the importance which he thought ought to be attached to the force of public opinion.

It is, therefore, inconceivable that Mr. Lloyd George should not realise that "public opinion" exists in France as well as in England—a public opinion which is well informed (much more so in respect of foreign affairs than is the case in this country), and which, upon the whole, is reasonable.

When in February, 1920, Mr. Lloyd George himself suggested that it was expedient to abandon the clauses regarding the delivery to the Allies of war criminals, the French Government did not remind him that he himself was the author of those sections, for which he fought so long and strenuously, as has been related. The French thought, rightly or wrongly, that his change of heart was inspired by a by-election which had gone against the Government, thus reversing Mr. Lloyd George's view on the requirements of public opinion. He relinquished in 1920 what he had struggled to obtain in 1919. He was giving away what was his own. The French people were indifferent. The French political world was mildly amused.

But it was natural that the feeling in France should be otherwise when Mr. Lloyd George began to give away the

French rights under the Treaty. I say Mr. Lloyd George because at the successive conferences he has never hesitated to make the most of two facts: his predominant personal position as the sole political survivor of the makers of the Treaty (a position, however, which began to count for less when he had to contend with M. Briand), and the desire of France to preserve the alliance and possibly get some compensation for the conditional support promised by the Treaty, which came to naught by reason of the American defection.

In many speeches in the House of Commons, Mr. Lloyd George has referred sympathetically to the future fears and to the present position of France. But whatever may be the effect he makes in Parliament, he no longer deludes either France or Germany upon one point. Both of these countries know that his attitude at the conferences of the Allies and his public utterances are often absolutely at variance the one with the other.

M. Poincaré wrote in November, 1920, that the desire of a certain political group in England to cultivate closer friendship with Germany did not constitute a sufficient reason for taking from French pockets the gifts it wanted to make to Berlin. The former President of the Republic suggested with irony, but with some aptness, that England, if she wanted to make presents to Germany, might give back her share of the German merchant shipping and some of the former German colonies. He admitted that Great Britain was entitled to the compensations she had received, but protested that the losses of France were such as at least to entitle her to get what the Treaty guaranteed.[100]

Writing six months later, in May, 1920, General de Castelnau was in accord with the prevalent feeling in France when he expressed the same views in language equally precise:

> "Our Allies cannot fail to recognise the moderation of our demands as compared to the advantages which they have acquired by the Armistice of November 11th, and by the Treaty of Versailles. By these agreements England has increased, or rather, destroyed to her own profit, not the territorial fortune of Germany (about which she cared nothing), but the redoubtable maritime fortune of the German Empire, whose fleets boldly menaced and hotly contested the political, industrial, and commercial destinies of the United Kingdom. England further obtained fruitful 'mandates' which enlarged the extent of her former colonial possessions, and naturally permitted her to contemplate with serenity the ever increasing value of oil-producing territories. France, on her part, limits her modest ambitions to the temporary seizure of a tangible political and substantial security which will safeguard the reparation of her ruins, threatened by the quibbles and the tricks of a Germany who was listened to with too much complacency. The country is undeceived, and is tired of conferences, protocols, agreements, and default notices, of which the high-sounding names have until now masked the desolating emptiness."

These statements by M. Poincaré and General de Castelnau throw into bold relief the point which is too often lost sight of or ignored when the French claims are discussed in England. It is not a question of France protesting that the Treaty gives her less than her Allies. As a matter of fact, every country seems to think that the result of the Peace Conference was to her own

comparative disadvantage, which in itself is a healthy sign and a testimony to the all-round fairness of the Treaty. But the stand taken by France to-day is: “Whatever our hopes may have been, we are not complaining about the Treaty of Versailles. We accepted it when we signed it. All we ask is that we should be paid under that agreement—paid exactly as you have already been paid. That the provisions that happen to be in our favour should be executed as were the provisions which were in your favour. We want nothing more than what is given us by the Treaty. We will accept nothing less.”[101]

In another way Mr. Lloyd George irritates public opinion in France by either arrogating to himself personally, or by assuming for Great Britain a position to which the Prime Minister has no right, and for which his country has no desire. Mr. Lloyd George is in the habit of setting himself up as an arbitrator between France and Germany. He forgets altogether that the spirit of the Treaty is that England and France should be Allies in obtaining its execution just as much as they were in waging the war which led to it. One can easily imagine Mr. Lloyd George’s fiery indignation if, for instance, M. Briand should have had the opportunity (and should have been so ill-advised as to take it) to speak in the Chambre des Députés urging England to patience and moderation in respect to getting possession of the German colonies and ships given to her by the Treaty; and setting himself up as one who (his own country having been already largely satisfied) wanted to be equitable between England and Germany. Yet that was exactly the language of Mr. Lloyd George on May 5th, 1921, when telling the House of Commons of the result of the Conference held in London. While some weeks later he used the same tone in speaking of the trouble in Poland,—an episode to which I shall

refer hereafter. Undoubtedly this attitude is in some degree personal to Mr. Lloyd George. But when the French are exasperated by it, they may well regret that they were so hasty in exiling M. Clemenceau from public life—in preventing him from taking any further part in securing the execution of the Treaty which was so largely his own work. Mr. Lloyd George would have acted differently had he been faced by the fixity of purpose, the patience, and, at times, the sardonic irony of M. Clemenceau.

But it is interesting to consider what is, in fact, British public opinion upon the question of the execution of the Treaty.

In the first place the public is not well-informed: partly by reason of its own neglect, and partly on account of the omissions of the Government. Upon one occasion at the Peace Conference Mr. Lloyd George's spokesman protested against the proposed occupation of the Rhine, saying (*inter alia*) that the English public would not understand the necessity for that action. To this M. Tardieu very aptly replied: "You say that the English public does not understand this question. It is the business of the British Government to make the country understand. The English people did not, any more, understand in 1914 the necessity for conscription. The war taught it many things."

Secondly, public opinion in England is absolutely opposed to participation in any plans or undertakings for the territorial aggrandisement of France: partly because of the burden which would be imposed upon the taxpayer, but above all because the country hopes to avoid further warfare in this generation at least.

Simply in order to make my argument clear, I state here that I am unreservedly in accord with that view.

The stand taken upon the question by the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily News* (from which I entirely dissent) is at least comprehensible and logical. Those journals thought from the outset that the Treaty was imperialistic, and in some respects unfair, and have always been more or less opposed to the execution of many of its terms.

But the Prime Minister has never said that he thought the Treaty was unjust: on the contrary, he pronounced it a just one. He is therefore unable to make the same plea. Yet M. Millerand told me some days after the meeting at San Remo that Mr. Lloyd George had become white in the face when he accused France of having territorial designs because she had occupied Frankfurt. While in the following year he asked M. Briand to make some statement to a press agency whereby he would place himself on record as having no such intentions.

All that France has ever asked is the fulfilment of the Treaty. Possibly Mr. Lloyd George may find these demonstrations useful in order to conciliate a certain political section which he does not wish to antagonise. But he certainly has never been able to indicate one single instance in which France has sought to go beyond the conditions of the Treaty.

At the time of the Frankfurt incident in 1920, the one occasion when his Government (or anyway his secretary, Mr. Philip Kerr: it is difficult to say how far Lord Curzon was responsible) was so ill-advised as to make the attempt, Mr. Bonar Law (as told in a former chapter) was forced to ask that he should not be compelled to explain fully the conduct of the Government in giving a certain statement to the Press.

Similarly, invidious attempts have been made to convince the public, first, that France was not working, as every country

must now work, for her own self-preservation; and secondly, that she was not taxing herself sufficiently.

Both suggestions are easily refuted.

Since 1919—since the conclusion of the war in which she lost 1,364,000 in men killed, 740,000 mutilated, and 3,000,000 wounded, a war which increased her debt from 35 to 221 milliards—France has, without outside assistance, and without the aid of payment by Germany, spent 25 milliards on the work of reconstruction; has brought back to the destroyed regions 75 per cent. of the population driven out by the German invasion; has repaired her railways, 52 per cent. of her roads, and 84 per cent. of her canals; got on a working basis 26 per cent. of her destroyed factories; has brought again under cultivation 68 per cent. of her devastated land; and, finally, has reopened 99 per cent. of her schools.

Taxation is purely an internal question. It has nothing whatever to do with the execution of the Treaty of Versailles.

Under that Treaty certain compensations were guaranteed to France. They were guaranteed unconditionally. There were no reservations to the effect that the clauses of the Treaty affecting France would be operative only if she taxed herself as heavily as England (or any other country) thought was proper.

That point being clear, it may be added that, if France does not impose sufficient taxation, she herself will be the ultimate sufferer. At the present time French taxation, especially direct taxation, is very much less severe than that which prevails in England. But that does not tell the whole story. I leave aside the fact that a country which has not only for some years been partly in the possession of the invader, but which has been purposely despoiled by that invader, is in a special category for taxation

purposes. For there is another, a deeper reason, which renders heavy direct taxation almost impossible in France.

I recall a conversation with M. Jean Dupuy a few months before his death. M. Dupuy was a practical politician in the best sense of that phrase and an astute man of affairs. He said that he did not exactly see how France could surmount her financial difficulties, that he could perceive no way out of what he called a vicious circle; and that he would despair, were it not for his unalterable conviction that his country must inevitably triumph, that France could not be crushed.

I referred to the matter of direct taxation. M. Dupuy pointed out that it would be difficult to collect a very heavy income tax anywhere in France, and impossible in the country districts: that it was a tax so opposed to tradition (which in France means more than it does in England) that its payment would be systematically evaded.

The obvious retort is that conscription was opposed to the traditions of Great Britain. But there is a vast difference between war-time measures and enactments operative in time of peace.

Finally, I am convinced that British public opinion is not in favour of Great Britain taking advantages under the Treaty, and preventing or in any way being an obstacle to France getting what the Treaty guarantees her. The truth is that the whole matter has become so complicated by various conferences, which have been the signal for a cloud of official and semi-official announcements, that the country is far from being clear about where the matter rests to-day. But if the point was put plainly—are we to take our part and not support France in getting hers—the answer would undoubtedly be in the negative. There is the

strongest aversion to any further war. But the country is equally at one with France about the execution of the Treaty, as it was about the waging of the war.

Nor is any such stand openly taken by the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily News*. Their opposition, as stated, is rather to the Treaty as a whole.

The only newspaper which to-day says that England should get what she can and let France make the best of it is the *Daily Express*. This is the organ of Lord Beaverbrook, who is at all times one of the most insidious enemies of France. Many instances might be given. It will suffice to refer to one of the most recent. After the London Conference in May, 1921, the *Daily Express* blamed Mr. Lloyd George for having allowed France to impose her views; and added that the policy of the Government ought to be inspired solely by England's own interests.

But after all France looks not so much to British public opinion as to the British Prime Minister, who made the Treaty with that public opinion in view, always repeating that he alone understood it, always considering it, and always protesting about the allowance which should be made for it.

In the result the French view is that since the Treaty was signed Mr. Lloyd George has subordinated the interests of France to the exigencies of his own political situation. Unfortunately the Prime Minister's conduct at the Peace Conference, as well as his subsequent attitude, have given some ground for this suspicion.

It would be unfair to judge Mr. Lloyd George solely upon the evidence of French witnesses. But we have the testimony of Mr. Robert Lansing, the American Secretary of State, and also

one of the plenipotentiaries to the Conference. Referring to Mr. Lloyd George's insistence upon the inclusion in the Treaty of certain of his election promises, he proceeds:

> "He was, besides, resolved to obtain the cession of the principal German colonies in Africa, and of the German Islands in the Pacific, south of the Equator; the control of Mesopotamia; a protectorate over Egypt, and a protectorate over Persia if the affairs of Persia were to be settled by the Conference; the destruction of German naval power, and the elimination of the German merchant marine, the rival of Great Britain in the commerce of the world. The British Prime Minister clung tenaciously to these precise and essentially concrete and egoist aspirations of his country; and by his adroit way of manœuvring was able to get satisfaction upon almost all. But he seemed to think that once these ends were attained, the decisions regarding other questions were of relatively slight importance unless they directly interested Great Britain, and that to study them carefully was a needless waste of time and energy."

Mr. Lansing's unprejudiced account proves once again that Mr. Lloyd George deserves the gratitude of his country. He neglected no opportunity to get for her what he thought was right.

But, on the other hand, if an American observer thought that Mr. Lloyd George cared for nothing except getting what he wanted for his own country, it is not surprising that Frenchmen with equal opportunities of observation came to the conclusion

that if the British Prime Minister was indifferent to their claims during the Conference, he could hardly be relied upon to enforce the fulfilment of the Treaty in favour of their country once his own had actually been paid.

What has happened since has strengthened this conviction. The destruction of the German Fleet, the dispersal of the German merchant marine, the possession of the German colonies—upon all these points, which Mr. Lloyd George made his chief concern at the Conference, Great Britain has already received full satisfaction. But in respect to the clauses of the Treaty guaranteeing France that the things to which she, on her part, attached most importance—disarmament and payment for reparation—Germany has long been in default. Nor has Mr. Lloyd George been a firm or consistent friend in supporting France in her efforts to obtain fulfilment.

It is admitted that his parliamentary statements sometimes leave little to be desired, but it is thought that his actions at the decisive moments have not been consistent with his speeches.

Without having recourse to any of the extreme (and sometimes unjust) criticisms of Mr. Lloyd George, I will quote two from sources which are moderate. M. André Tardieu, who throughout his book is scrupulously fair to Mr. Lloyd George, says:

> "Aucun Française n'oublie, ni n'oubliera le rôle immense que la Grande Bretagne a joué dans la Guerre, et, dans le rôle immense, le rôle immense de son premier ministre. Mais aucun Française non plus ne se résignera a souscrire à la façon dont M. Lloyd George a conçu l'exécution de la paix. Passionément amoureux des solutions

rapides, impatient des long efforts, M. Lloyd George s'est laissé prendre en 1920 aux formules de moindre énergie qu'il avait répudiées en 1919. De ce fait, l'Angleterre est apparue à la France comme moins soucieuse que celle-ci d'imposer à l'Allemagne le respect de ses devoirs. Trop d'Anglais ont oublié que leur pays, si magnifiquement qu'il ait travaillé pour la victoire, n'a été ni envahi ni saccagé. Trop d'Anglais ont méconnu qu'à la France saignante et ruinée autre chose était dû que le conseil quotidien de renoncer à son droit. L'immense majorité du peuple britannique, ni, j'en ai l'assurance, M. Lloyd George lui-même, n'ont varié dans leur sentiments de loyale fraternité à l'égard du peuple français. Mais tant de gens ont affirmé que la France seule retarde l'avènement de la paix, en reclamant l'exécution d'un traité qui lie les vainqueurs entre eux, comme les vaincus par rapport aux vainqueurs; si peu ont expliqué notre inéluctable nécessité d'obtenir réparation sous peine de plier, pour un demi-siècle, sous le faix injuste d'une charge écrasante que l'équivoque orale dressait entre les deux pays a irrité le nerfs et troublé les espirits. Réduit à ses élements de base, le problème est simple. Si les chefs responsables de la politique britannique infligeant un démenti aux engagements souscrits par eux en 1919, pensent que les clauses de réparations sont inéxecutables, ils avaient, en conseillant à la France de réduire une révendication sanctionée par leurs signatures, le devoir de lui offrir les compensations

> financières en leur pouvoir et la garantie du minimum auquel ils le pressaient de se résigner. Ils ne l'ont point fait."[102]

Again, *Le Temps*, after having expressed the opinion that Mr. Lloyd George's attitude towards France would have a permanent effect on the Entente, returned to the subject a few days later (May 6th, 1921), saying: "The speech made yesterday by Mr. Lloyd George will not suffice to efface the impression produced in France by the decision of London, even though the British Prime Minister spoke before the House of Commons as one would have liked to hear him speak during the Sessions of the Supreme Council."

France is to-day convinced that Mr. Lloyd George has two voices. This sentiment was in no degree impaired by the London Conference of May, 1921. It was recognised that whatever had been obtained was due more to M. Briand's firmness than to Mr. Lloyd George's sincerity or goodwill. Moreover, the actual result of that Conference was not regarded with any great satisfaction. The arrangement seemed to be better than the Paris plan in respect to the amounts of the earlier payments. But an element of uncertainty was introduced by making the trend of German imports a basis of calculation. In other ways, and as an agreement between the Allies themselves, it was considered to be upon the whole an improvement upon former efforts.

But when these and all other arguments in favour of the last ultimatum were admitted, the fact remained that it might result only in another promise being made by Germany. There was no desire in France that Germany should reject it. But there was no illusion about the true import of acceptance. It was realised that it meant another German signature; that possibly it might mean

that and nothing more; that the signature of May, 1921, might prove to be of no more practical value than the German signature of June, 1919.[103] It was not an encouraging sign that a large section of the German Press urged acceptance upon the ground that an opportunity might thus be found for later discussion of various points. The fact that the German Government would have to guarantee execution "without conditions or reserves" seemed to mean nothing to these newspapers; whilst they held out the hope that before complete execution there might be differences of opinion between England and France by which Germany would profit.

M. Poincaré wrote, after the London Conference that M. Briand had had to contend against a prejudice on the part of some of France's Allies which carried everything before it; and that in the result, not only had further delay been granted, but that the conditions presented to Germany had been attenuated in various ways. Further, he alleged that it was under the pressure of those Governments that the Reparations Commission, which was summoned to come from Paris to London during the Conference, withdrew the demand it had previously made regarding the milliard marks gold deposited in the Reichsbank.[104]

Moreover, the character of Mr. Lloyd George's speech in the House of Commons on May 13th, 1921, regarding the trouble in Silesia, had the unfortunate but natural effect of creating the impression that he was inclined to be more concerned about infractions of the Treaty when Germany stood to lose than he was when they were at the expense of France.

The British Prime Minister spoke with solemnity about the necessity of observing the Treaty of Versailles. The French

comment was that it was regrettable that he had not always censured with equal severity and promptitude lapses on the part of Germany more grave and more clearly proved than those charged against the Polish Government.

Indeed, subsequent developments have shown that on this occasion neither Mr. Lloyd George's statement of present occurrences nor his summary of Polish history would stand very close scrutiny.

It was, however, more difficult to take seriously the sequence of his discourse. For the Prime Minister proceeded to draw a picture of Germany at some future time declining to carry out her obligations, and basing her refusal upon the example of Poland having with impunity defied the Treaty. Hence, according to Mr. Lloyd George, the imperative necessity to compel Poland instantly to conform to its terms.

It would be difficult to give a better illustration of an inverted argument. Did it never occur to Mr. Lloyd George that if Poland was, in fact, evading the Treaty of Versailles (which has not yet been proved), it might well be because he had for many months allowed Germany openly to set at naught the same Treaty? It will suffice to refer to the troops maintained in Bavaria and elsewhere, after repeated summonses.

The Prime Minister's regrettable outburst was not allowed to pass without a speedy retort. Those who read it one morning, and who knew M. Briand, realised that Mr. Lloyd George would undoubtedly hear some plain speaking in reply. Indeed, that same afternoon, M. Briand made to the correspondents of the Foreign Press who came to see him at the Quai d'Orsay, a statement equally as pointed, and more founded on facts than that of Mr. Lloyd George. After questioning the exactitude of the

Prime Minister's history,[105] M. Briand warned Germany with impressive sternness that she would take any action in Silesia at the risk of war with France. While finally he said, without any ambiguity, that it was not within Mr. Lloyd George's province to assume to settle these matters alone. "We are great countries who can talk looking each other in the face. Neither of us has the right to give any orders to the other. The British Prime Minister cannot alone take the initiative to authorise German troops to penetrate into Upper Silesia."

In brief, M. Briand intimated to Mr. Lloyd George that France would not accept the rôle of a brilliant second. In so doing he both assuaged the wounded feelings of his own countrymen, and also once again directed British public opinion to the point from which Mr. Lloyd George had been leading it astray (the point which I venture to think is undoubtedly the most important in considering the present relations between the two countries): that France wants only that by which Great Britain has already benefited—the execution of the Treaty of Versailles.

In all these circumstances—in view of what has happened in the past, and of the atmosphere created in the present—French public opinion would greatly have preferred to have some solid security which this time might have bound Germany to her engagements.

It was not M. Briand's fault that he returned to Paris empty-handed. Upon that point Mr. Lloyd George was adamant. Nevertheless the London Conference may be regarded as a step in the right direction. But it is a step of which the ultimate result depended mainly upon the policy pursued by Downing Street.

Unfortunately it has since become known that at least one political party in Germany withdrew its opposition to the

acceptance of these conditions (and doubtless also to the fulfilment of them) by reason of assurances given through the British Ambassador. Herr Stresemann, the leader of the People's Party (of which Hugo Stinnes is the mainspring), who was a competitor with Herr Wirth for the Chancellorship, submitted, through the British Embassy, several questions which he desired to have answered by Mr. Lloyd George himself. According to his own version of this transaction[106] neither Herr Stresemann nor his party considered that the reply made by Lord d'Abernon, giving his personal impression in respect of the questions, was sufficient to modify their attitude towards the ultimatum: but that the day after it had been accepted "an official reply" arrived which was communicated to Herr Stresemann by Lord d'Abernon. This answer of "the English Government" was esteemed to be satisfactory in regard to the withdrawal of the penalties; and not unsatisfactory respecting Upper Silesia and the other points in question.

When the story of this extraordinary proceeding first became current an official communiqué was issued to the effect that there was not the least foundation for the assertion that the Prime Minister had been in private communication with Herr Stresemann or with any German statesman upon the subject of Upper Silesia. This was true to the letter. But the announcement was lacking in amplitude. For to the ordinary mentality, a German statesman who hands a list of questions to the British Embassy asking that they should be forwarded to the British Prime Minister for an answer, and is subsequently given by the British Ambassador a reply which the latter has received, and states that he has received, from Downing Street, is fairly entitled to say that the reply comes from the Prime Minister. While it is significant that after Herr Stresemann had published

the exact facts, as above recounted, there was no further official denial, or even explanation. The fact, uncontroverted and uncontrovertible, is that Mr. Lloyd George or his Cabinet (if he prefers to shelter himself behind that barrier), did make an independent official communication to the leader of a German political party, upon a question affecting all the Allies, and especially France.

The questions and answers were as follows:

Question: Will acceptance by Germany of the Allies' conditions involve cancellation of the sanctions imposed in March last after the Conference in London?

Answer: The sanctions imposed on March 8th, especially those involving the occupation of Düsseldorf, Duisburg, and Ruhrort, and the establishment of a Rhineland Customs barrier, ought, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, to be cancelled in the event of the acceptance of the Allied demands. The opinion of His Majesty's Government on this point is being communicated to the French Government.

Question: Can His Majesty's Government give an assurance to the effect that they will not allow any solution of Upper Silesian questions other than the one founded on the report already made by the British representative of the Plebiscite Commission?

Answer: The German Government may rely on the desire of His Majesty's Government to pay due regard to the important German interests involved, and, although it is not possible without prior consultation with Great Britain's Allies to give an assurance in the sense desired, the German Government may rest assured that His Majesty's Government will press for an equitable settlement on the basis of strict, impartial execution of

the Treaty of Versailles.

It was at this very period that Mr. Lloyd George was urging that France ought not to send another division to Upper Silesia (to ensure the safety of the troops she already had there) without a prior agreement with Great Britain. It has been pertinently asked whether it was more serious to send a few thousand men to Silesia, which could not affect British interests, or to promise Germany an abrogation of penalties, thereby possibly causing a grave injury to French interests and French security.

Leaving aside all question of fidelity to the country's engagements, I propose now to examine the effect of Mr. Lloyd George's counsels from the standpoint of whether or not it is in the interests of Great Britain—irrespective of every other consideration. When I refer to Mr. Lloyd George's "policy" I allude to what he actually has done, not to what he has said: for I am fain to agree with the French statesmen who affirm that upon this matter the Prime Minister's acts and words are not always reconcilable.

For the past year or more Mr. Lloyd George has unconsciously been doing his utmost to prove that M. Caillaux was a true prophet. Caillaux consistently maintained that a clash with Germany would be disastrous for France, because even if she were victorious, thanks to English assistance, it would be England who would reap the major benefit, while France would be left saddled with the greater burden.

What M. Caillaux years ago foretold would happen is exactly what many Frenchmen to-day say has happened. Moreover, those most forward in making such statements are not journalists whom Mr. Lloyd George imagines are prejudiced against him, not violent writers in the Press, not confirmed

opponents of M. Clemenceau, who denounce the results of the Treaty because it was partly his handiwork; but they are men who have borne the same burden of office as Mr. Lloyd George, who are too patriotic to be inspired by personal feelings, and who, finally, certainly have no traditional sympathy with M. Caillaux: they include M. Poincaré, who was President of the Republic throughout the war; M. André Tardieu, who was Mr. Lloyd George's colleague at the Peace Conference; M. Barthou, and General de Castelnau, to recapitulate the names of those only whose words I have cited textually.

Poincaré, Tardieu, Barthou, and de Castelnau stop short in their complaints. But others who hear them go one step further and say, "Eh bien! Après tout, Caillaux avait raison."

In 1920 Mr. Lloyd George was warned that M. Barthou intended to speak in the Chambre des Députés, assailing his policy (and, in fact, by chance M. Barthou spoke the same day as the Prime Minister made a conciliatory speech in the House of Commons); and was, I believe, told at the time that it was muttered in a high political circle in France that: "If Lloyd George means to turn to Berlin, we had better go there before him."[107]

In my opinion, that is an exaggeration of anything which is likely to happen. But what is true is that Mr. Lloyd George's policy is beginning to breed a party which sincerely believes that France is getting little or nothing from the Entente. There is no question about the great value placed upon a close understanding and upon close co-operation with Great Britain. Indeed, it is exactly because so much was expected from those relations that the disappointment is so bitter. It is known that Clemenceau said: "In exchange for the two Treaties I have

reduced the period (of occupation of the Rhine country) which I at first demanded," and that in the result France did not get the guarantee. It is known that Great Britain has already realised most of the advantages or compensations which accrued to her under the Treaty. It is known that France cannot rely even upon the full and undivided moral support of Mr. Lloyd George's Government in enforcing execution of the provisions which most vitally affect her.

It has been said that Englishmen are wont to forget that they are also Europeans. In previous generations that may have been an error. To-day it is almost a crime. For with the changed mode of warfare and the development of engines of war (a development which is still in progress), England in time of conflict now has few of the advantages of being an island, while retaining all the disadvantages, and notably that of an island which cannot feed herself.

The conditions under which invasion might be possible is a tempting subject, barred to those who can profess no competence in military speculations. But not many soldiers will dissent from the suggestion that the situation would be parlous were Calais, Boulogne, and other Channel ports in hostile hands.

Any policy of isolation, so far from being "splendid," would be alike fatal to this country and disastrous for the cause of peace in Europe.

When General Smuts recently made such a suggestion the *Times* pointed out that there was no such political tradition as General Smuts imagined; and that, on the contrary, from the days of the Tudors downwards, Great Britain had been forced to take an active part in the affairs of Europe for the sole purpose of

ensuring her own safety.

For the reasons already stated, that necessity is even stronger to-day than ever before. While the manner in which we sometimes in the past participated in Continental arrangements (by temporarily aiding one Power against another, such assistance ranging from moral support to the payment of subsidies, as circumstances might demand) is to-day neither feasible nor in harmony with the spirit of the times.

John Bright once called the system of the Balance of Power a gigantic scheme for the out-door relief of the aristocracy of Great Britain. There is now neither demand nor room for any balance of Power of that nature. But our only security in the event of war is a Continental alliance.

What is more important, and what is more desired by British public opinion, is some security against war. That again can only be obtained by an alliance with a country which has ports within a certain distance of England. Only two countries come within that category: France and Germany.

If Mr. Lloyd George sincerely believes that France has ideas of territorial expansion he is right in rejecting the idea of any closer understanding.[108] That might mean a war of aggression, and Great Britain is almost unanimously opposed to any participation in conflicts of that nature.

But it must be said in passing that even that sincere belief would not relieve Mr. Lloyd George from the obligation of seeing that France gets justice in the execution of the Treaty.

If the Prime Minister thinks that an alliance with France might commit the country, then he must look elsewhere. He can only look towards Germany. While if he does not look in time

he may look there in vain.

To-day such statements may seem fantastic. But the face of foreign affairs changes quickly, and the cardinal error of statesmen in power from the days of Greece until our own time has been to think that the present must always continue. For instance, who would have said in 1900 that Japan, a country into which, fifty years earlier, no foreigner was allowed to enter, would, as the result of the war, be to-day one of the four Great Powers of the world?

Who would have said ten years ago that Poland, that kingdom dead for two centuries, would be a national entity in 1920?

Or, if such examples fail to convince Mr. Lloyd George that it is difficult to see the future in foreign affairs, that what seems fanciful to-day may be a fact to-morrow, he might recall the statement he himself made in January, 1914, that the idea of the possibility of war with Germany was absurd, and that the peace of the world was so assured that the strength of the British Navy ought to be reduced without any further delay.

M. Tardieu has asked—and has answered—the question whether or not it is too late to repair the faults committed since the Treaty was signed at Versailles. He naturally and properly regards the question from the standpoint of a patriotic Frenchman. No doubt he endorses what M. de Freycinet said in his “Souvenirs”: “The security of a great people ought not to rest upon the goodwill of others, but upon the precautions which it takes by its armaments and its alliances.” Looking at it from the other side of the Channel, I am convinced that the prosperity of Great Britain depends upon the prompt execution of the Treaty, and the conclusion of a defensive alliance with France.

Mr. Charles Schwab, a firm friend of the Allies from the early days of August, 1919, and one of the greatest economic authorities in the United States, speaking at a recent meeting of the New York Chamber of Commerce, said:

> "I have just returned from Europe and I have come with renewed admiration for the courage, enterprise, and determination displayed by France, England, Belgium, and Italy. These nations were wonderful as our Allies in the war, and are marvellous in meeting the tasks of peace; but if there is one thought above all others that was borne in upon me by my observations in Europe, it is that Germany has gone back to work as has no other nation in Europe.
>
> "Believing as I do that the strength and prosperity of a nation depend on the efficiency of its labour, I had something of a shock in contemplating this thought: Is it possible, after having won the war, we of the Allied nations, with everything in our hands, will allow Germany to win the peace through the efforts of her labour?
>
> "Germany to-day can put a ton of steel into England twenty dollars cheaper than it costs England to make it. Germany to-day is selling pneumatic tools in Detroit, where formerly we made such machinery and shipped it to Germany to be sold cheaper than she could make it. The difference is solely a matter of labour costs."[109]

Every time it appears that Great Britain and France are not absolutely unanimous in their determination to compel Germany

to honour her signature; every time that Mr. Lloyd George publicly sets himself up as an arbitrator; every time that the Berlin Press has reason to announce that France cannot persuade England to assist her in forcing Germany to execute the Treaty—the commercial superiority indicated by Mr. Schwab is confirmed and enhanced; and Germany is encouraged to evade her obligations.

The only safe policy for Great Britain is a strong defensive alliance. If Mr. Lloyd George impairs the understanding with France the chances are that he is conducting his country to a fate which will obscure to posterity the great services he rendered during the war.[110] Opportunism may sometimes be temporarily profitable in party politics. But in the conduct of foreign affairs it can only create confusion and breed bad feeling. In that domain a settled policy is essential; and no sporadic displays of clever manipulations can inspire the same degree of confidence or ensure the same measure of security. Unfortunately it cannot be denied that at present, instead of going towards a closer and more formal understanding with France, he is contributing to the degeneration, if not to the dissolution, of the Entente.

Some months ago the *Times* said that the true results of the war depended absolutely upon the cordiality and the intimacy of our relations with France; that an official understanding was not sufficient; what was necessary was a friendship, penetrating men and women of all classes and conditions in both countries.

More than that, what is necessary for the security of England, for the peace of Europe, and for the immediate future of civilisation is an absolute defensive alliance between the two countries.

Victor Hugo, referring to a peace conference, once wrote:

“Le congrès, c’est l’Angleterre serrant la main à la France, c’est l’Amérique serrant la main à l’Europe.” That is equally true to-day, and in existing circumstances the first step lies with the British Government.

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FOOTNOTES:

[1] Since the above was written M. Maurice Paléologue has disclosed in a letter to *Le Temps*, dated 15th March, 1922, how M. Rouvier deliberately sacrificed M. Delcassé. The revelations made by M. Paléologue more than confirm the strictures I ventured to make upon Rouvier's conduct in this matter.

[2] *Le Plan de Campagne Français*, P. 17 note. A similar statement was made in the Chambre de Députés during the debate on the Treaty of Versailles in 1919.

[3] *See Rapport Général sur le Traité de Paix*, P. 75.

[4] De Castelnau, as the President of the Commission, M. Maurice Viollette, subsequently remarked, was so scrupulous in his statements that whereas he had here used the word "Entente" in giving evidence, he changed it, in correcting the shorthand proof, to "Entrevues."

[5] As a matter of fact, de Castelnau did not exactly say that he knew of no agreements between the General Staffs. He stated that he knew of no agreement between the two countries: but, as shown above, refers specifically to interviews between the General Staffs.

[6] Eventually only four divisions were sent.

[7] Letter from General de Selliers de Moranville in *Pourquoi Pas?* August 8th, 1919.

[8] A list of those who composed this deputation, together with their explanations to-day, would make interesting reading.

[9] *La Revue de France*, July 1st, 1921, page 34.

[10] In a recent interview (*La Revue de France*, July 1st, 1921, p. 40) M. Cambon has stated that a great city financier, "Lord X," was summoned to this morning meeting and asked to give his opinion. M. Cambon adds that "Lord X" has since often told him that he advised intervention, but that he has every reason to believe the contrary. One would naturally think that "Lord X" referred to the late Lord Cunliffe, then Governor of the Bank of England, and as such the financial adviser of the Government. But M. Cambon's words

rather indicate, without however making it absolutely clear, that it is a peer who is alive to-day. M. Mermeix has recently affirmed that it was Lord Rothschild, though his account of the view expressed by the latter differs somewhat from that of M. Cambon. (See *Le Combat des Trois*, p. 70.)

[11] It is noteworthy that while von Tirpitz, and at one moment von der Goltz, urged the capture of Calais and Boulogne, so as to cut off the British troops from their base, the idea never found favour with the General Staff, because the very soul of its plan was the conviction that the success of the overwhelming blow it had prepared would entail the fall of all other objectives.

[12] M. Fernand Engerand, Deputy for Calvados. See his work *Le Secret de la Frontière*.

[13] It was, of course, the General Staff, and not the Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre, which was charged with the duty of drafting the plan of campaign.

[14] Bankers and economists likewise held the view that under modern conditions a general European war would be so onerous and so costly that the world could not support it for more than a few months. These calculating machines forgot to make allowance for certain elements in aroused human nature. The best prophet respecting the kind of warfare which would ensue was Bloch, a Polish banker, who in the nineties practically predicted trench warfare and many other things which came to pass. But neither the work in which he propounded his theories, nor the museum which he established at Lucerne to illustrate them, were taken very seriously.

[15] The anonymous author of *Le Plan XVII.* (Payot, Paris), who is favourable to the General Staff, states (pp. 38-'9) that nothing contributed more to render the doctrine of the defensive *à l'outrance* popular in the Army than two lectures given by Lieutenant-Colonel de Grandmaison in the spring of 1911. He asserts that there is no doubt that these lectures had such an effect upon the High Command that it embodied in Plan XVII. the principles which Grandmaison had laid down.

[16] *Critique des Travaux du Grand État-Major.*

[17] See *Rapport de la Commission sur la Métallurgie en France*, p. 57.

[18] Plan XVII. was approved by the Government in the spring of 1913, and became operative in April, 1914.

[19] The author of *Le Plan XVII.*, while favourable to the General Staff, admits (page 177) that its miscalculation about the German forces was the cause of the incomplete state of the French fortresses and of the insufficient preparation of the Army and of the entire country for war.

[20] See *Le Revers de 1914 et ses Causes*, by Lieutenant-Colonel de Thomasson pp. 114 and 126. See also *Le Plan XVII.*, which gives a slightly different estimate.

[21] According to General Percin's evidence before the Commission sur la Métallurgie, the total of the German forces was two million, as compared to Buat's estimate of one million three hundred thousand. But it is not clear exactly what Percin took into account in arriving at this figure.

[22] The 75 was adopted when the late General Galiffet was Minister of War.

[23] Colonel de Thomasson does not attribute a "very great influence" on the result of the frontier battles to "the overwhelming German superiority in heavy artillery." But he admits that the French troops were often greatly shaken "by these great cannon, to which they could not reply." See *Le Revers de 1914 et ses Causes*, p. 38. This weakness of the French Army was well known in Germany. Tirpitz has even recorded that on 6th July, 1914, the Emperor predicted that France would hold Russia back partly on account of her own lack of heavy artillery.

[24] See *Le Plan XVII.*, by XXX (Payot, Paris), pp. 184-'5.

[25] Previous plans had been guilty of the same omission.

[26] See *Rapport de la Commission sur le Métallurgie en France*, Part II., p. 11.

[27] The reason (which seems obscure) for this belief must have been entirely of a military nature, for in no other respect could it make any difference whether the violation of neutrality extended to the whole or to part of the country.

[28] I purposely do not discuss the contention that an increased use of the reserves would have rendered the Three Years' Service

unnecessary.

[29] See *Rapport de la Commission sur la Métallurgie en France*, Part II., p. 47, Note II.

[30] In giving evidence before the *Commission sur la Métallurgie*, Joffre was asked about this announcement. He made his favourite reply, "I don't remember." But when he seemed to question the authenticity of the document, the President of the Commission placed it before him.

[31] See *Le Secret des Frontières*, by Fernand Engerand, Deputy for Calvados.

[32] See *Rapport de la Commission sur la Métallurgie*, Part II., p. 47.

[33] See *Rapport de la Commission sur la Métallurgie*, Part II., p. 108.

[34] When the news was brought to him, Lanrezac said: "It is treason" ("C'est une félonie"). Lanrezac himself, without quoting his own words, admits that he expressed his ill-humour, and adds: "Of course, I never thought that General Haig, a true gentleman and a real soldier, was responsible." See *Le Plan de Campagne Français*, page 231.

[35] But in reply to a direct query, his Chief-of-Staff, General Hély d'Oissel, wrote to Lanrezac in December, 1916, denying that he had ever said that Lanrezac "had lost his head," and rendering credit to the latter's strategic dispositions for the fact that the Fifth Army was still intact at the time of the Battle of the Marne.

[36] *La Revue Militaire Française*, July, 1921.

[37] See article by M. Messimy in the *Revue de Paris*, September 15th, 1925.

[38] *Quatre Mois de Guerre*, written by the French General Staff in December, 1914, for the use of the representatives of France abroad.

[39] See *Le Matin*, September 6th, 1920.

[40] In one publication the letter reads "Deux jours"; in another "Deux heures"; but "Deux jours" appears to be the correct version.

[41] If Joffre and the General Staff had any definite plan to

engage a battle elsewhere, which was upset by Galliéni's precipitation, they have never revealed it, although they had an official opportunity to do so when they gave evidence before the Commission sur la Métallurgie.

[42] With some exceptions, French critics state fairly the part taken by the British Expeditionary Force in the Battle of the Marne.

[43] Neither von Klück nor other German commanders seem to have much respect for the strategic abilities of any French general except Foch. Regarding who was responsible for the German retreat and the necessity for it, see article by Captain Koeltz in the *Revue de Paris*, September 15th, 1921, where the evidence is summed up in favour of von Klück as against von Bülow.

[44] This incident has been given by Lanrezac, and has also been recounted in various French works; but I have taken the English version as quoted in an article on Lanrezac in the *National Review*, March, 1921.

[45] Sir John French has confessed that he also thought that the Battle of the Marne was the beginning of the end.

[46] Anyone familiar with Sir Henry Wilson's conversation will note the remarkable similarity. Foch's words translated into colloquial English would sound as if they proceeded directly from Wilson.

[47] I do not cite my authority for this incident, but it was related to me by the politician who made the offer.

[48] Apparently he is the only person who is able to give any intelligent explanation of Einstein's theories.

[49] It has been said (see *Nivelle et Painlevé*, by M. Mermeix, pp. 67-8), and I believe rightly, that Painlevé's attention was fixed on this point by a memorandum drawn by his Chef de Cabinet, Colonel Heilbronner. M. Jacques Heilbronner, who is a Maître des Requêtes au Conseil d'Etat, rendered invaluable services throughout the war, especially as an intermediary between those in high authority. It may be said that while always remembering that he was a Frenchman he did not forget that his grandfather had been a British subject.

[50] It is only fair to add that that is the French system, and was not invented by Nivelle.

[51] In a recent interview (published in *Le Matin*, September 21st,

1921) Ludendorf said:—"What General Pétain did in 1917 was a magnificent work—more difficult and more important than winning a battle—the moral reconstruction of an army in which Bolshevist propaganda was making its ravages."

[52] Since the above was written I have read M. Painlevé's recent articles in *La Revue de Paris*, and Mangin's still more recent retort (*Revue de Paris*, March 1st, 1922). Apart from some details, this new phase of the controversy leaves my view unchanged.

[53] Painlevé has related how insistent Lloyd George had previously been upon this condition, which he had made a *sine qua non* in respect to the military advisers of the Supreme War Council. Its primary object was to make Robertson ineligible.

[54] Few men of his generation got such insufficient credit for their attainments and foresight as did "Lord Charles." His popularity entirely overshadowed his abilities. The current saying that sailors thought he was a politician, while politicians could only see in him a sailor, gave a grossly unfair impression. He was a man of strong personal likes and dislikes, the former often based on instinct, the latter always founded on fact. But his judgments were sober, sound, and full of common sense, although his manner of expressing them was often breezy. Long before the majority of his fellow-countrymen he saw much that was to happen, and gave warnings which were neglected. His other qualities, especially the strength of his friendship, and the sincere affection he was able to inspire, rest in the recollection of those who knew him.

[55] Interview with Maréchal Foch in *Le Matin*, November 6th, 1920.

[56] Sir Henry Wilson was also present. Lord Milner, in the account he has given of the Doullens meeting, tells how he motored to it with Wilson, who urged upon him the necessity of Foch being given supreme command.

[57] I am aware that a director of the Canadian and Pacific Railway Company, the late Sir Stamford Fleming, did attack Aitken in the Press regarding certain private transactions they had had together; but the matter never proceeded further than Fleming stating his own view of the disagreement.

[58] To a foreigner it is curious to notice that one of the most striking things in M. Deschanel's appearance is the scar of a wound

which he received in a duel with M. Clemenceau many years ago.

[59] Since writing the above another former Prime Minister has died: M. Combes.

[60] Since the proof of this chapter was corrected, M. Berthelot, at the instance of M. Poincaré, appeared before a Disciplinary Council charged with having sent on his own authority, but signed in the name of successive Ministers of Foreign Affairs (M. Leygues and M. Briand), certain telegrams designed to strengthen the position of La Banque Industrielle de Chine, of which his brother was chairman. As a result of the finding of this body M. Poincaré decided that he should be suspended from the Diplomatic service for ten (10) years. As Philippe Berthelot is now 56, this practically ends his career at the Quai d'Orsay. He has thus paid dearly for whatever error he may have committed. But his country is also a loser, for France does not at present possess many diplomatists of Berthelot's calibre. It is worth recalling that in 1920 a determined effort was made by Berthelot's friends, both in France and in England, to secure for him the succession to M. Paul Cambon. The fact that, at this juncture, M. and Mme. Berthelot had the honour of lunching alone with the King and Queen was advanced as showing the welcome which he might expect as Ambassador. But it is to my personal knowledge that Berthelot's partisans were unable to get any encouragement from M. Millerand, who was then Prime Minister. M. Painlevé would also, at this time, have liked to follow M. Cambon at Albert Gate.

[61] The five French representatives were Clemenceau, Pichon, Klotz, Tardieu, and Jules Cambon. Loucheur was not a plenipotentiary, but he shared with Tardieu the burden of the heavy work.

[62] Doumer's quasi-agreement in August, 1921, with the representatives of Great Britain and Belgium about the division of the money then paid by Germany met with the disapproval of his colleagues, and nearly led to his resignation. Doumer and Loucheur, two men of a different generation, different training, and a different experience of life, are known to be antipathetic; and it is no secret that Loucheur coveted Doumer's post.

[63] *Agadir*, p. 132.

[64] It was M. Poincaré himself who insisted or anyway desired

that Malvy should be retained in various War Cabinets as Minister of the Interior. This fact was communicated to me by one of Malvy's colleagues in the Cabinet.

[65] Captain P. E. Wright, the Assistant Secretary of the Supreme War Council, in citing Mr. Lloyd George as the only man who could have won the war, and in taking issue with attacks upon the Prime Minister, qualifies his praise as follows:—"In spite of his oblique and subterranean methods; his inveterate taste for low and unscrupulous men; of the distrust felt for him by his favourites, even at the height of their power; of his superficial slipshod, and hasty mind, this determinization of character made him, without any assumption on his part, the leader of the Alliance."

[66] It is sometimes stated in France that during the dark days of March, 1918, Clemenceau showed to better advantage than did Lloyd George.

[67] M. Albert Thomas, as Director of the International Labour Bureau, receives a salary equivalent to more than 350,000 francs at the present rate of exchange. Like all salaries of the League of Nations it is paid in pounds sterling and is not subject to any income-tax or super-tax. Thomas is doubtless the most highly-paid Socialist politician in the world.

[68] The only reason why Brougham never held any office after his Chancellorship was that after that experience no one wanted to work with him. At one moment he had a fleeting idea of becoming a naturalized Frenchman so that he might be elected a Deputy.

[69] Written before Dr. Addison's severance from his salary.

[70] The last Blue Book giving information on this subject (June, 1921) shows that the Government's experiments as a merchant were also disastrous, the losses upon various exploitations running into millions of pounds.

[71] At the outset of the war even Liebknecht (who repented later) approved of the violation of Belgian territory. While in those early days, when a speedy victory seemed in sight, no political group was more pan-Germanist than was the Socialist party. It was only when the result became uncertain, and they realised that they might have to bear the penalities instead of sharing the spoils, that they again began to prate about the blessings of internationalism.

[72] *Aux Ecoutes*, July 24th, 1921.

[73] It was not only the indiscreet and unwary Mr. Philip Kerr who had cause to complain about Mr. W. C. Bullitt's disregard of the principles which generally prevail regarding confidential communications. Mr. Bullitt's own countryman, Mr. Robert Lansing, censures him for a similar lapse. (*The Peace Negotiations*, pp. 240 and 241.)

[74] I returned to London on Monday evening and went to the House of Commons, as it was announced that Mr. Lloyd George was to speak on this subject. I arrived in time to hear the Prime Minister say that in all he had done, including his reception (together with Lord Curzon) of M. Krassin, he had acted in complete accordance with M. Millerand. This statement was inexact. M. Millerand had told me the day before that he had been amazed when he heard of that meeting.

[75] Most of Wrangel's troops managed to escape to Turkey. For some time they were supported by the French Government; but finally they were faced with the option of being taken back to Russia, being sent to Brazil or elsewhere, or being left to shift for themselves.

[76] *La Russie des Tsars pendant la Guerre: Revue des Deux Mondes*, May 1st, 1921, page 136.

[77] Since the above was written the French Government has begun (February, 1922) certain negotiations with the Soviet Government. It is worth noting that this possibility of some arrangement is seriously alarming the Wilhelmstrasse.

[78] General Gillain, Chief of the Staff of the Belgian armies, had also been asked to attend this meeting, but was unable to arrive in time.

[79] Some slight changes in Foch's original proposals were made during these meetings.

[80] But of course, according to the American Constitution, Lansing was not directly responsible to Congress.

[81] Mr. Lansing says "The opposition of those statesmen who represented the British Empire, in contradistinction to those who represented the self-governing British Dominions." The self-governing British Dominions are essentially part and parcel of the

British Empire. Presumably, when Mr. Lansing wrote "British Empire," he meant to indicate the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

[82] Certainly, if Mr. Elihu Root or Mr. Taft had been amongst the American plenipotentiaries, they would never have signed a treaty of which they disapproved upon several vital points; which, according to his own account, is what Mr. Lansing did.

[83] This meeting of the Cabinet was held on April 25th, Foch's previous demand to be heard by the French Delegation to the Conference having been refused. Foch gave each member of the Government a memorandum, and then himself spoke in support of it. His views were supported only by M. Poincaré. Apart from members of the Cabinet, M. Jules Cambon, M. Tardieu, and General Weygand were also present.

[84] As a matter of fact it was only in 1815 that Prussia got a footing on the left bank of the Rhine. Throughout the war French statesmen had this idea in mind, but were rather coy about putting it forward; and perhaps not altogether frank, for when M. Doumergue went to Russia in January, 1917, he got a formal promise that the Czar's Government would support France upon this point. This understanding was not disclosed to the British Government.

[85] According to his own account Foch told Clemenceau that he was doubtful whether he could conscientiously be present when these treaties were to be signed at Versailles. He was finally persuaded by the late M. Jean Dupuy, whom Clemenceau sent to see him later.

[86] See *La Paix*, p. 268.

[87] M. Tardieu recounts that, on May 6th, 1919, after Maréchal Foch (who, with some indiscretion, had allowed his views to become public) had told the Conference in no uncertain language what he thought was necessary, Mr. Bonar Law remarked to one of his colleagues: "If an English general adopted such an attitude towards his Government he would not retain his command for five minutes." Mr. Bonar Law momentarily forgot that during the war the British Government was, on one occasion at least, defied by Haig; and that Mr. Lloyd George himself told a French minister that Haig's strength in the country was such that he could not force him to do what he would like.

[88] *La Paix*, p. 233.

[89] M. Poincaré, in replying to M. Tardieu (*Le Temps*, September 15th, 1921), disagreed, and took the view expressed above.

The English version of this article differs slightly from the French text. It reads as follows: "If at that date the guarantees against unprovoked aggression by Germany are not considered sufficient by the Allied and Associated Governments, the evacuation of the occupying troops may be delayed to the extent regarded as necessary for the purpose of obtaining the required guarantees."

[90] I am not criticising the policy which led Mr. Lloyd George to make an arrangement with the Soviet Government. On the contrary, as stated in a former chapter, I think it was the right one in the circumstances.

[91] Mr. Bonar Law summed up his view of this matter by saying: "The occupation has only two objects—to protect France and to guarantee the execution of the Treaty. In neither case is the period of fifteen years justified."

[92] The division as finally agreed upon was as follows: 52 per cent. to France and 22 per cent. to Great Britain.

[93] I refer to M. Tardieu's series of articles in *L'Illustration*.

[94] At the outset of the Conference M. Clemenceau, in answer to a protest made by Sir Robert Borden, had boldly stated that the settlement of the terms of peace was, in the final analysis, the business of the Great Powers.

[95] Mr. Lansing is evidently referring to Mr. Wilson as being "Warped by prejudice," and to Mr. Lloyd George as being "Dominated by political expediency."

[96] If Mr. Philip Kerr was right, then the Government is wrong now in assenting to the Leipzig farces.

[97] Since the above was written, M. André Tardieu has stated categorically in a letter to *Le Temps* (September 13th, 1921) that between June 2nd and 16th, 1919, Mr. Lloyd George continuously demanded (and stated that he was expressing the unanimous opinion of his Cabinet) that the Reparation Clauses of the Treaty should be made more favourable to Germany; that that country should be allowed to maintain an army of 200,000 instead of 100,000 men; that

she should be admitted to the Society of Nations almost immediately; and that there should be a plebiscite in Upper Silesia: but that it was only on the last point that M. Clemenceau could be induced to cede.

M. Tardieu (who added that Mr. Lloyd George was throughout hostile to the occupation of the Rhine) disclosed much which the Prime Minister did not see fit to tell Parliament.

[98] Disarmament may or may not be practicable. But it is difficult to understand why military attachés, part of whose duty it is to ferret out the military secrets of the countries to which they are accredited, while pretending not to do so, should not be used openly for the purpose of the verification of armaments.

[99] I purposely made no reference to the recent dispute about the division of the first milliard.

[100] *The losses of the various Allies were:*

Dead on the field of battle :—	
Russia	1,700,000
France	1,364,000
Great Britain	754,000
Italy	496,000
Total dead (battles, results of wounds, and illness):—	
United States	115,000
Percentage of dead in proportion to the population:	
France	3.80
Great Britain	1.35
Italy	1.24
United States	0.10

The expenses, counted in milliards of francs, were:

Great Britain	190
United States	160
France	143
Russia	92
Italy	65

These figures are taken from the *War with Germany*, by Colonel Leonard P. Ayres, of the United States Army. They are cited and adopted by M. André Tardieu in his book *La Paix*. They differ in no material respect from such official figures as are available. M. Mermeix gives 680,000 and 1,398,000 as the respective English and French losses in killed and disappeared, and states that the latter figure is official (*Foch et les Armées d'Occident*, p. 119).

[101] General de Castelnau in *L'Echo de Paris* of May 11th, 1921.

[102] *La Paix*, p. 494.

[103] This has been borne out by much which has occurred since these words were written.

[104] Whether or not M. Poincaré's specific allegation is correct, it is undeniable that the London Conference demonstrated publicly what had long been known in certain circles, viz., that the Reparations Commission had been deprived of all independence, and was used or ignored as the majority of the Allies desired from time to time. It will be remembered that M. Poincaré himself resigned the Presidency of that Commission when he came to the conclusion that he could serve his country more usefully otherwise.

[105] The Polish Prime Minister, M. Witas, speaking in the Diet on May 19th, 1921, challenged the accuracy of Mr. Lloyd George's history even more bluntly, and referred him to "Volume 25, Page 90, of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, a British work of reference."

[106] In a letter to the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*: quoted in *Le Temps*, August 1st, 1921.

[107] Since these lines were written, M. Loucheur, the most practical and one of the ablest of French statesmen, has taken the indicated path by negotiating directly with Herr Rathenau.

[108] Written some six months before the Cannes Conference.

[109] But the question of exchange plays a great part in that.

[110] I have admitted that, failing an alliance with France, the most logical and, in the end, the safest policy, would be an alliance with Germany, but do not desire to consider the prospect further.

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Transcriber's Notes:

global alterations:

Gortchakoff *changed to* Gorchakoff
Compiegne *changed to* Compiègne
Paleologue *changed to* Paléologue
Berenger *changed to* Bérenger
Le Câteau *changed to* Le Cateau
Clémenceau *changed to* Clemenceau

page 12: Herzgovinia *changed to* Herzegovina
page 23: thing *changed to* think
page 27: ful *changed to* full
page 36: movement *changed to* mouvement
page 36: emploiraient *changed to* emploieraient
page 36: Mauberge *changed to* Maubeuge
page 44: proferred *changed to* proffered
page 48: operations *changed to* operations?
page 51: misstatements *changed to* mis-statements
page 55: Militiaire *changed to* Militaire
page 57: Violette *changed to* Viollette
page 65: sutout *changed to* surtout
page 115: Nievlle *changed to* Nivelle
page 150: groud *changed to* ground
page 170: Ratenau *changed to* Rathenau
page 210: deathblow *changed to* death-blow
page 219: mantain *changed to* maintain
page 244: scatch *changed to* sketch to read "so far as it refers to the sketch of Lord Northcliffe"
page 247: housetops *changed to* house-tops
page 247: misstates *changed to* mis-states
page 253: occpuation *changed to* occupation
page 267: beaurocracy *changed to* bureaucracy
page 300: perpathetic *changed to* peripatetic

changes within Index:
Gillian *changed to* Gillain
Hennessey *changed to* Hennessy
Jouvenal *changed to* Jouvenel
Mauberge *changed to* Maubeuge

Ratenau and Rathenau; combined entries under ‘Rathenau’
Schluffen *changed to* Schlieffen
Stephano *changed to* Stéphane (Lauzanne)
Terpitz *changed to* Tirpitz
Terpitz and von Tirpitz; combined entries under ‘Tirpitz, von’

[The end of *The Pomp of Power* by Laurance Lyon]