

Honesty is the Best Policy

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***"Oh wad some power the giftie gie us
To see ourselves as ithers see us!"***

— *Burns*

I.

We are in for one of our periodical orgies of Cant. Right (and God, of course, thank God!) struggles gallantly in its tiny way against Armed Might, Tyranny, Barbarism; the Allies pit their puny force against the hordes of Huns. Parsons preach on David and Goliath, publicists invoke Jack the Giant-Killer. The odds are always ten to one. Fortunately, one Englishman is a match for 18 1/3 Germans, as statistics prove.

Englishmen, even educated Englishmen, even travelled Englishmen, manage to hypnotize themselves into believing this.

In point of fact, gallant little Germany is against a world in arms. Austria has been torn for many years by internal divisions; only a part of her population is of German stock. But against Germany and this one friend are arrayed Russia, France, England, Servia, Montenegro, and Japan; and every one of these nations is throwing its whole diplomatic weight into the task of getting Roumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Holland, Denmark, and the United States of America to join in. We are only about six to one at present, and feel insecure.

My own view is simpler. We have waited for a long while to smash Germany and steal her goods. We have taken a first-class opportunity, and we shall never regret it.

II.

We thank God that we are not as other men. There are no stained glass windows bright enough for us. Our haloes are top heavy.

We have quite forgotten that the Belgian is the most cruel, mean, and cowardly cur in Europe, that we have demonstrated till all are blue against him as assassin, torturer, mutilator, and cannibal. We have dined in our thousands to acclaim his disgrace. We heard of nothing but "Red Rubber;" of niggers with hands, and feet, and indeed all that was off-choppable, off-chopped; of rape, robbery, murder, anthropophagy, and so on, until even our sanest etymologists began to derive Belgium from Belial and Belphegor and other leading Lucifuges of the hierarchy of the Pit. King Cléopolde, who was really a foolish kindly old gentleman with a taste in petticoats, the spit of a hundred vieux marcheurs in any Pall Mall Club, was compared to all the Roman Emperors from Caligula and Nero to Justinian and Diocletian. And now it is Gallant Little Belgium, and *Les Braves Belges*, and enough about heroes and martyrs to make any decent man vomit!

Anything the Belgians may have got they asked for.
Flagellum qui meruit ferat!

III.

We thank God that we are not as other men. Humph! If the French are being beaten, they have only themselves to blame. Does one expect a Leonidas from France?

Outside the sacred Mount of Parnassus, where dwell Rodin, and Anatole France, and a few more, what names does one know but names of scandal? Eiffel, and Reinach, and Dreyfus, and Henry, and du Paty de Clam, and de Lesseps, and Meyer, and Mme. Humbert, and Mme. Steinheil, and Mme. Caillaux. Since 1870 the history of

France is a history of mean and mostly unintelligible squabble, fringed with Jesuitry and pseudo-Mason intrigue, a viler, an obscurer money-grubbery than even that of Haussmann and the Second Empire. In all the labyrinth of French group-politics is there a name unsmirched by what in any other country would be felony?

What sort of an army is it whose officers conspire wholesale against the state and have to be brought over by a Bourse-ridden republic, bribe beating bribe? What sort of republic whose chief magistrate can be smacked publicly in the face at a racecourse and not dare to retaliate, the pretenders to whose throne can allow their conspirators to culminate and at the last moment fear to show themselves, so that all their followers are thrown into prison — when a single bold push would have set them on the throne?

Calmette, the Bel-ami journalist, who by trickery and treason makes himself the greatest power in French journalism, threatens to expose the master-blackmailer, to unmask the "impregnable" frontier fortresses that are still armed with the guns of 1872; he is murdered by a woman who in England would be considered as a doubtful starter in any concourse of moderately respectable demi-mondaines — and a jury is found to declare that she did not commit the act to which she openly confesses!

England has spent about nine centuries in hating and despising France, in crying out on her for atheism and immorality and all the rest of it; Edward the Seventh, one night upon Montmartre, shwears the French are jolly good shportsh, bigod, and lo! the Angel of the Entente Cordiale. Mimi Tete-Beche is Sainte-Genievüve, and Jésus-la-Caille becomes the Saviour of Protestant England.

Is it a nation in which abortion has become a national danger that will freely give her sons to the Republic?

If so, only because the French people is not corrupted, even by their politicians.

I love the French — I will not yield precedence to Edward VII, though I prefer Montparnasse to Montmartre, and pay for my own dinner at Lapérouse's where he accepted £20,000 to dine at the Café Anglais — and I want to see them victorious and prosperous. But I shall not mistake France for Sparta.

IV.

As to Russia, we have had nothing but whole-hearted abuse since 1850. Even their ridiculous fear of having their children stolen by Jews for the purposes of ritual murder — as they most fixedly believe — has been represented as religious bigotry, when it is at the worst but peasant ignorance like the belief in witchcraft.

We have received and fêted the would-be assassins of their Tsar; we have imagined Red Sunday in St. Petersburg, and fulminated against pogroms, and preached against vodka and brutal Cossacks till anyone who has even been to Russia wants to go away quietly and die; and the next thing is that we hold up our railways and smuggle 150,000 of the brutal Cossacks aforesaid to fling them on the flank of the German armies in Normandy and Picardy. Well, no! it was only a Secret Service lie. But how dearly we all wished it true!

Have we not wept and yelled over Poland? And has not the Tsar promised autonomy to Poland once and again, and tricked?

My own view of Russia is that it is the freest country in the world; but it is a little sudden for our Nonconformists who have denounced her as a tyrant for the last sixty years, to hail her thus incontinently as the Champion of European Liberty.

V.

It is disgusting to have to foul clean paper with the name of Servia.

These swineherds who murdered and mutilated their own king and queen; whose manners make their own pigs gentlefolk; these assassins who officially plot and execute the dastard murder of the Crown Prince of a nation with whom they are at peace; these ruffians so foul that even cynical England hesitates to send a minister to their court of murderers — these be thy gods to-day, O England!

"Heroic little Servia!"

VI.

I have not a word to say against the Montenegrins. They are decent, honest cutthroats.

VII.

And now we come to the treacherous monkeys of Japan, the thieves and pirates of the East. Who makes the shoddy imitations of European and American machinery, forges the names of famous firms, sticks at no meanness to steal trade? Who, under cover of alliance with England, fostered in China a boycott of all English goods?

Only yesterday Japan was at the throat of Russia — or at least trod heavily on one big toe. Today in Tokio they sing the Russian national anthem, and cheer the ambassador whenever he appears.

Why not? of course. It is natural, it is human; it is all in order. But it is fickleness and treachery; it is hypocrisy and humbug. Diplomacy is of necessity all this; but at least let us mitigate the crime by confession!

Human nature is never so bad when it is not shackled by the morality of emasculate idealists.

Does any person who knows the Far East believe even in an opium dream that Japan had any quarrel with

Germany, or any care for her alliance with England? Kaio-Chau was an easy enough prey; well, then, snatch it, and chance the wrath of schoolmarm'd America and the egregious Wilson. But for God's sake, and by the navel of Daibutsu, and the twelve banners of the twelve sects of Buddha, let us spew out the twaddle about honor, and justice, and oppressed China, and the sanctity of alliance!

VIII.

And England! England the Home of Liberty, the Refuge of the Oppressed, the Star of Hope of the Little Nations. I suppose that any other nation about whom they sang

"They're hanging men and women too For wearing of the green."

would suppress the song by yet more hangings. The English are cynical enough to sing it themselves!

The English are ever on the look-out for atrocities. Bulgarian atrocities, Armenian atrocities, Tripolitan atrocities, Congo atrocities, and now German atrocities. One notices that the atrocity of the atrocitators varies with their political objectionability.

The parable of the mote and the beam was made for England, surely.

German atheism! from the compatriots of Shelley, Thomson, Bradlaugh, Morley, and John Burns.

German sensuality! from the fellow-citizens of Swinburne, Rossetti, Keats, and a dozen others.

German blasphemy! when the Kaiser invokes the God of Battles. As if the success of British arms were not prayed for daily in the churches, the name of God invoked in the addresses to the soldiers, and the very motto of England, *Dieu et mon droit!* It is true the Kaiser was first to make emphatic an insistence that God was his ally; it seems that England has the old literary grievance against those *qui ante nos nostra dixerunt!*

Indeed *saevita!*

German militarism! A strange rebuke from a nation whose saner citizens at this hour are cursing themselves that they did not have conscription twenty years ago, from a nation which has by a sham Insurance Act riveted heavier fetters on their slave-class than were ever ball and chain.

And it is England that can produce a firm of piano manufacturers to start a boycott of German pianos — their own pianos being all German but the cases! — and a boycott of German music. And it is England that can show a composer who writes to the papers that he will now "try harder than he ever tried before" to beat Bach and Beethoven and Brahms and Straus and Wagner! In the meantime he will refrain from the wicked and unpatriotic luxury of Vienna steak! And since Kant thought two and two make four, for all true Englishmen they must make five in future.

Have Englishmen forgotten their own Royal family?

"The very dogs in England's court They bark and howl in German."

Edward VII spoke English with an accent; and at the first hour of war with Germany we found the first Lord of the Admiralty a German Prince!

Until this year England has never been at war with Germany in the course of history since the Conquest. Our very speech, half German, betrayeth us.

All this is finished. The German is a Hun, and a Vandal, and a monster, and a woman-torturer, and a child-murderer, and runs away in his millions at the sight of a Territorial from Hoxton. And the British Army has won victory after victory against enormous odds, some sixtyfold, and some eightyfold, and some a hundredfold, and has retreated (for strategic purposes, luring the hosts of the Kaiser to their doom) nearly as fast as a frightened man can run, and exactly as fast as a victorious host can pursue them.

It is not a quarter of a million against 60,000 as it was in the Boer war. And even then the British were so handsomely beaten that in a few years they were obliged to hand back the government to the "defeated" enemy, who now treats the "rooinek" a great deal worse than ever Kruger did. But he professes "loyalty" whenever it suits him, and we all boast of pacified and united South Africa, and shoot down British miners and deport their leaders, in flat violation of their own constitution. In short, all parties have acted throughout with that good sense which in themselves they call Truth and Righteousness, and in others cynical immorality.

IX.

But more shameful and silly than all is our attitude to the diplomatic situation. Even papers normally sane are found perverting truth, and distorting facts, and misrepresenting motives, and misinterpreting plain words, in a way that would bring a blush to the cheek of a non-conformist. The common hack newspapers call the flight of the British from Mons to Paris "the greatest military feat of modern times," and one feels that Xenophon must be shivering in the Elysian Fields (while President Poincaré finds the Champs Elysées too hot for him) at the news of how the Retreat of the Ten Thousand has been eclipsed. But this sort of lie is common to every country, and indeed the Germans are as keen to publish stories of the murder of their wounded, treacherous attacks by civilians, and any other violation of the rules of war which the imagination of their journalists can invent, as any other nation.

With parallel cant, they represent Cossacks as cannibals, and Highlanders as naked savages; but the most fair-minded of critics can hardly cavil at their complaint that in order to swamp their brave little army the world has been ransacked of every tribe, race, kingdom, prin-

cipality, and power. *Germania delenda est*, and the end justifies the means.

Algerians, not only of Arab, but of negroid and even negro stock, have been hurled into the line; India has gushed out a venomous river of black troops — the desperate Ghorka, whose kukri is thrust upwards through the bowels, the Pathan, whose very women scavenge the battlefield to rob, murder, and foully mutilate the dead, the fierce Sikh, the lithe Panjabi, the Bengali even, whose maximum of military achievement is The Black Hole of Calcutta!

Against the Boers we Englishmen did not dare employ savage troops. Europe would have risen in arms at the abomination.

Today we do it, because all armed Europe is already either for us or against us. And, with all that, we use the Japanese! Can we complain if the German papers say the that Kaiser is fighting for culture, for civilization, when the flower of the allied troops are black, brown, and yellow "heathens," the very folks whom we have stopped from hook-swinging, suttee, child-murder, human sacrifice, and cannibal feast? From Senegambia, Morocco, the Soudan, Afghanistan, every wild band of robber clans, come fighting men to slay the compatriots of Kant, Hegel, Goethe, Schiller, Heine, Beethoven, Wagner, Mozart, Dürer, Helmholtz, Hertz, Haeckel, and a million other perhaps obscurer, no less noble, men of the Fatherland of music, of philosophy, of science, and of medicine, the land where education is a reality and not a farce, the land of Luther and Melancthon, the land whose life blood washed out the Ecclesiastical tyranny of the Dark Ages.

The Huns!

Indignation has led me from the point of my paragraph. It was my purpose to expose the infamous pretense — which, however, is not too inane to dupe even clean-sighted Englishmen in their hysteric hour — the pretense that the Kaiser is a "mad dog," a homicidal

maniac, a man like Nebuchadnezzar in the Hebrew fable, or like Atilla the Scrouge of God, or Tamberlane.

It is a lie. The Kaiser has always been, and is today, a man of peace. He has indeed lived up to the maxim *Si vis pacem, para bellum* and, loaded with the legacy of hate which the impolitic annexation of Alsace-Lorraine had thrust upon his shoulders, he could do no less without offering the breast of Germany to the ravisher. A lamb to the slaughter, indeed, with La Revanche in every mouth! What would he do, with men yet alive who remembered Jena, and the ceaseless raids and ravages of Bonaparte?

But in a hundred crises he kept his head; he kept the peace. He had plenty of chances to smash France forever; he did not take them. An ambitious prince might have put a relative on the throne of Louis XIV while France was torn by the Boulanger affair, the Panama scandal, the Dreyfus horror, when Diogenes might have gone through France with a modern search-light for his lantern without finding a single man who was not a traitor to his country, or at least to the Republic, and the most trustworthy man of affairs was he who could be trusted to put the "double-cross" on every one. The Kaiser never stirred.

It would have been easy to destroy the Russian menace at the time when Japan was straining the sinews of the Tartar giant, or when the Moscow Revolution showed that the Tsar could not trust his own soldiers, and the Imperial Guard, hastily summoned from St. Petersburg, shut up the garrison of Moscow in the Kremlin, trained their own guns upon them, and disarmed them. The Kaiser did nothing.

And then came the Triple Entente.

Germany was held like a deer in a lion's jaws. Austria, her only friend, was being ruined by insidious politics even more surely than by open attacks. Barred in the Adriatic, barred in the Baltic, the Teuton had but one small strip of reasonably open coast. That the Kaiser

made that coast the greatest navel base in the world was held to be a "menace."

Surely the Russo-Japanese war and the Boer war showed plainly — if any fool there were who could not see it *à priori* — that the greatest, widest, best, and only impregnable military base is the sea. Today we can bring Russian troops from Vladivostock or Archangel and land them at Ostend, a million at a time, and Germany must be well-served indeed by spies if she knows of the operation in time to guard against it. Is it then so treacherous and aggressive if Germany, threatened by an alliance (hypocritically described as an entente) of powers outnumbering her by six to one, sought to keep open a path to raid that universal base of operations? For this she has ruined herself financially, has hampered her social and economic development, has been compelled to serve the Leah of war when the whole genius of the nation lies with the Rachel of peace. The English are the least military and the most warlike of all peoples, said someone; the converse is truer still of Germany.

From Vercingetorix to Wilhelm I, Germany, as Germany, hardly could claim a victory. Even today it is military Prussia which drags Bavaria art-lover, and all the peasant provinces, to war. And all the might of the Junker and his fierceness and his bravery and his aristocratic prestige could never do it but for the root-fact which every German feels: that, unarmed, he would be the morsel of a moment for the Russian Octopus, or the toy to grasp and shatter of some warrior schoolboy like Caesar or Napoleon.

Pan-Germanism itself, intrinsically bad as it is if regarded from the standpoint of the Universe, has its apology. One becomes tired of being an irremovable obstacle; one thinks it may be less strain on the nerves if one takes one's turn at being an irresistible force. "Why does a goalkeeper look old sooner than a centre forward?"

Even the stolid Teuton nature must tire of the perpetual squeeze of Russia, the spurs of the French chancier struck even and anon in his hide.

And since the Entente the ordeal of the Kaiser has been Promethean. Insult after insult he has had to swallow; injury upon injury he has had to endure. The Kiao-Chau adventure, harmless and rational, was balked, then sterilized, then counterpoised. The colonies did not prosper. England built like a maniac against his navy; Churchill deliberately pulled his nose by the impudent proposal for limitation of arguments.

Agadir was a fresh humiliation; for a few acres of uninhabitable jungle on the Congo he had to surrender all interest in Morocco, a country he had nursed for years.

It is still a diplomatic secret, and I must not betray it. But who financed Italy in her Tripolitan adventure, and why?

The last straw was the Balkan war. Blotted was his one hope of escape to the East; his ewe-lamb, Turkey, was torn to pieces before his eyes, and he could not stir a finger to prevent it. Austria still blocked in the Adriatic, Italy alienated from the Triple Alliance, the Slav expanding everywhere, Constantinople itself threatened, Roumania (even) turning toward Russia, he must have felt like a victim of that maiden of armor and spears that once executed justice on the weak. What was his only success? The formation of the Kingdom of Albania — a kingdom *pour rire*, a kingdom à la Gilbert and Sullivan, Prince William of Wied less like a cat on hot bricks than like a spider on a glowing shovel. He never possessed so much as his capital in peace.

And all this had been accomplished without sword drawn or cannon fired.

Here then stood Wilhelm, dauntless but defeated. His diplomacy had failed; his one ally was handicapped by domestic unrest; he was isolated in Europe; England was increasing her navy at a pace he could never beat;

France, with her three years' law, was proposing to increase her army by fifty per cent at a stroke; Russia was turning flank, pushing on through the Balkans subtly and surely.

And the Kaiser answered, "I am the servant of God; I stand for peace. The Crown Prince is for war; I banish him from the Court. When I am dead let him be master; but while I live I am for peace. And let him that draws the sword perish by the sword!"

And the Triple Entente gathered closer and chuckled: Aha! he dare not fight. Let us frighten the garotte!

So Serbia plots and executes the crime of Sarajevo. Austria, its aged Emperor smitten yet again and most foully, demands imperatively the disclosure of the accomplices of the assassins. Serbia replies in terms of evasion, evasion impudently cynical. Austria stirs. Russia — and there is no pretense possible, the murder of the Archduke was either instigated by Pan Slavism or was a threat equally to the Tsar as to any other ruler — replies by mobilizing. Before Austria has moved a man or a gun, Russia mobilizes.

And what was the position of the German Emperor? His bankers had told him that Germany could no longer endure the weight of her armor; the incident of Zabern had shown the Junkers that they could still control the Social Democrats, but that another year or two would see the end of their power. He must strike now or never.

He looked about him. The weakness of the British Government and its supposed preoccupation with the Ulster folly and the suffragettes encouraged him to hope.

He saw France, mere rotteness, its bandages torn off by the pistol-shot of Mme. Caillaux.

All things conspired; he would make one final effort for peace by threatening Russia.

And then he suddenly knew that it was no good. Nothing was any good; nothing would ever be any good

again. Sir Edward Grey spoke for peace, spoke of neutrality, in the House of Commons at a moment when thousands of British troops were already in Belgian waters, and the fleet, concentrated and ready for action, already held the North Sea.

France withdrew her troops from the frontier "so as to avoid any possibility of incidents which might be mistaken for aggression," while her Algerian and Senegambian troops were on the water, half-way to Marseilles.

He knew that this time there was no hope of peace. Abdication itself would hardly have saved Germany from a long-prepared, carefully-planned war, a war whose avowed object, an object in the mouth of every man in the street, was the destruction of Austria, the dismemberment of Germany. They had got him.

Even a worm will turn; even a Quaker will fight if he is cornered.

Wilhelm struck.

I write in English for those English who count, and this is the proper way to view the matter. Germany is a rich prize. We can capture German trade, German manufactures, German shipping, German colonies. We can exact an indemnity sufficient to cripple Germany for a dozen generations. We can split Germany into six kingdoms or republics, and weaken her beyond repair forever. We can double-cross Russia by insisting on the creation of a new Poland. We can destroy the German fleet, and economize on dreadnoughts. We can force our proletariat to accept conscription and starve off the social revolution. We can drown the Irish question in Lethe; we can fight a general election on the war, and keep the present gang of politicians in office.

And, best of all! we can achieve all this in the name of Honor, and the Sanctity of Treaties, and the Cause of the Democracies, and we can ask the blessing of God upon our arms in the name of Liberty, and Civilization, and Prosperity, and Progress.