

Changed Temper of England

By L. P. JACKS.

THE CONTRAST OF ENGLAND'S ATTITUDE NOW
WITH THAT REVEALED DURING THE BOER
WAR.

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"The next world, whatever it may be like, can hardly be more different from this than the England of to-day is different from the England of two months ago. We are all living in another state of existence. The thread of continuity has been broken and nothing is the same as it was. The very buildings yonder—Magdalen Tower, for instance—are changed; for now I think of it as *menaced* by German shells and it wears quite a different look in consequence. And most wonderful of all is the way the past seems to live again. Alfred the Great and Edward III and Drake and Nelson and Pitt have all come to life again. I can almost fancy that the Barons who shook their fists in the face of King John at Runnymede are walking about among the people in the street."

This was said in conversation the other day by a well-known Oxford humanist, and allowing for the touch of exaggeration it may serve to indicate the extraordinary change which has come over the mind and temper of Englishmen during the last few weeks. No further back than last July the national life was in a state of extreme confusion. We were quarrelling among ourselves—aimlessly for the most part. We were breathing an atmosphere of mutual distrust and suspicion. To-day we are a united people with our loins girt up for a great enterprise. We have a difficulty in recognizing our world, or ourselves as the same persons who used to live in it. It is one proof of an incredible want of imagination in the philosophic chauvinists who have driven Germany into this conflict that they never foresaw the change which the shock of war would produce in England. They noted our unwarlike apathy; they knew that we hated war and longed for an assurance of peace; they saw us engaged in our national shopkeeping and our sports and apparently caring for nothing else; they were fully informed about our internal quarrels and rightly concluded that we were all at sixes and sevens; they had been told, and rightly told, by the experts of their Intelligence Department that the whole of our financial and business classes dreaded a quarrel with Germany, and that the Liberal party and the Government were entirely pacific. The unrest among the natives of India, the enormous difficulties of our administration in all parts of the world, the growing independence of our colonies—all this they had at their finger-ends. The picture of England given by Treitschke, the arch priest of German chauvinism, who hated and despised the English, is not altogether false. As a picture of the nation in times when no danger threatens the State, it does little more than

slightly exaggerate the aimless, petty, sordid, unpatriotic elements of English life in its daily humdrum selfishness.

But what these wisecracks did not foresee was that under the shock of war all this would vanish as if by magic. They thought that, as we were divided in peace, we should be divided in war; that our pacificism would hamper our preparations and weaken our fighting arm; that we should go on thinking of nothing but our shops and our skins; that our middle class would never suffer any interference with their five o'clock teas; that Ireland would stab us in the back—as she has so often seemed ready to do; that India would seize the opportunity to revolt; that the ties with the colonies would snap under the strain. An intelligent child might have exposed these illusions. It required the "rigor and vigor" of the German intellect to overlook the certainty that, as Mr. Price Collier long ago warned them, England at war would not be the same country as England at peace. And so indeed it has turned out. Within a week of the declaration of war every labor dispute in the country was settled. Paid agitators rushed to the colors. Militant suffragism sank like a stone in the waters. The Ulster Volunteers, raised for civil war, offered their services to the Government. The Irish Catholics are enlisting in the King's forces. India, instead of revolting, sends us 70,000 of her finest troops: and seven hundred native princes spontaneously offer their wealth, their soldiers, and their persons. As to Canada and Australia, I need not describe what they have done. The poorest of the West Indies gives a cargo of sugar for the troops; and from the desolate Falkland Islands comes £3,000 for the relief of distress.

When war was declared there was no panic; but there was some bewilderment. The Government probably knew what was coming, but John Bull, who must never be confused with the Government, had been waked too suddenly from his afternoon nap and couldn't quite take it in. Of course, everybody was talking about the war and trying to get from his neighbor some light on the meaning of it all. Silly people rushed to the grocers' shops and laid in stores of provisions, and I heard of one old gentleman who ordered a new lock for his front door. But business and sport seemed to go on much the same as usual, and the outward aspect of things was not greatly changed. On August 10 I walked three miles to get an evening paper, and on turning to the column of "stop-press news" I found it filled with the reports of cricket matches! Plainly, John Bull was not going to be hurried; he would finish his game of bowls even though the Armada was in sight. There was something alarming in this "fat-headed complacency," and people who felt the gravity of the situation wondered and publicly asked how long it was going to last. It did not last very long. I think it was the news of the massacre and sack of Louvain that brought us to the first great turning point. Instantly a wave of wrath such as I have

never seen in England swept over the land. For the first time we clearly saw what we were fighting with and what we were fighting for. Only one thing more was needed to turn us from a nation of shopkeepers into a nation in arms. It has been said by one who has studied the military history of England that the fighting spirit of the nation is roused more by disasters than by victories. In this case there has been no disaster so far, but it was avoided only by a hair's breadth. The story of the four days' battle of Mons—a desperate rear-guard action fought against odds of three to one—in which the army lost one-fifth of its men and was only saved from annihilation by superb generalship, was precisely the kind of news to put John Bull on his mettle.

Since then there has been no more talk about "fat-headed complacency." There have been no more complaints about the slackness of recruiting. On the very morning when the official report of the battle was published the workers in a large brewery not far from where I am writing laid down their tools and walked in a body to the recruiting office; and to-day I see them in a neighboring field learning their steps—big, heavy-faced, beer-fed, awkward-jointed Britons. "A clumsy lot, sir," said a bystander who was watching them. "Not one of them could jump over a straw. But mark my words; when those chaps have been licked into shape it'll take a lot of Germans to shift 'em." It is the same all over England. Birmingham, the most "shopkeeping" of our cities, has sent 30,000 recruits in a fortnight and has raised a local corps in addition. When the universities assemble next month half the undergraduates will have gone to the front, and of those who remain most will be under military training: many of us will have empty classrooms. We write long letters to our boys on their ranches in the Argentine or their farms in Canada telling them all about the war, and *next morning* we get a telegram from Liverpool, "I am come home: have a bed ready for me to-night." Last week I met three sons of the present Prime Minister; all three were in khaki. This morning the mail is delivered late by a young gentleman from a neighboring country house. "The village postman has enlisted: and I'm going in a few days."

I imagine there must be many of your readers whose memories will supply a parallel to much of this from the time of your Civil War. I wonder if the crisis brought that consciousness of a sudden leap from one world into another which people in England are now remarking. In many respects the conditions must be the same. The sense of solidarity under the stress of common danger and the call of common duty, the sense in which so much that is finest in a nation's life has its origin, must then have been present with you as it is with us. You will readily understand the mood of exaltation, the emotional stirring, the feeling of the greatness of life that comes to every citizen in times like these. "These are

wonderful times: after all, I am glad I have lived to see them," is a remark I have heard from a dozen different people, both men and women, during the last few days. But I think that with you the preparation for what was coming was longer and more gradual. Moreover, your temperament is less stolid than ours and much quicker to respond to changed conditions. You require less shaking to wake you up. With us there was a thick crust to be broken through and deep-seated mental habits to be abandoned before we could realize what had happened to us. And when the realization did come it came like a thunderbolt. The two shocks I have mentioned, following in quick succession—the shock of horror from Louvain, the shock of peril from Mons—brought us to our senses.

As to the righteousness of our cause, thinking men are content to await the verdict of history. Naturally, we believe in it, and that with a fervor and unanimity which are both surprising and impressive. But no Englishman writing on the subject now can escape the disabilities of a special pleader. It is, however, very remarkable that many pacifists who were recently denouncing war with Germany as "a crime against civilization" now admit that our participation in the conflict is both just and inevitable. The fact is that their eyes have been opened. Nor is their case peculiar in that respect. Until the other day the educated classes of England knew little or nothing of the propaganda which has been going on in Germany with ever-increasing vigor for the last twenty years. If by chance they heard of it they treated the matter with contempt as the mere vaporings of jingoism. Not one in a thousand had ever heard of Treitschke or Bernhardt. It is only since the war that Bernhardt's work, "Germany and the Next War" (published in 1911), has been made accessible. That the book is no freak of an irresponsible individual, but a serious statement of public policy, is sufficiently proved by the fact that the German conduct of the present war, in its initiation, method, and strategy, has exactly followed the programme of Bernhardt, though happily it has not so far fulfilled his predictions. Under ordinary circumstances it would have been an act of folly on the part of any German writer to "give away" the plan. But I suppose Bernhardt anticipated that the English would not be sufficiently wide-awake to pay much attention to the matter. If so, he was right. None the less, the book has served one purpose the writer did not anticipate. Now that we have it in our hands we see clearly enough that we are fighting against a *diabolism* that threatens the whole of civilization; the nation has become *one* in that conviction, and we are calmly waiting for history to confirm the verdict. At the same time we know very well that diabolism of this kind—or indeed of any kind—does not represent the true spirit of Germany. Germany may have temporarily fallen under its spell, but the obsession is too immoral in its inner nature to be anything

more than a passing phase of the national mind. When its power is broken, the nation in which it originated will be the chief gainer and will condemn it utterly.

We mean to win through. But no sensible man among us is under any delusion as to the magnitude of the task. We know the high valor of the Germans, the enormous power of their military organization, and the ability with which their plans are laid and carried out. But we have our own sources of strength, and they are of a kind that give us more confidence the more we reflect on them. It is a healthy and a hopeful sign that our public men are not boasting, and that the populace is quiet. The tone of the press is measured; and in recording the doings of our forces at the front under-statement rather than exaggeration is the rule. There are none of the odious outbursts of public feeling that marked some of the phases of the Boer War—signs that the nation was *not* wholly convinced of the righteousness of its cause. There is, of course, as there must be in every war, an element of hatred at work; but it is directed almost exclusively against the system of Prussian militarism, and not against the German people. During the Boer War I was one of those who did not feel happy about England. But now it is altogether different. I have a deep conviction that we shall emerge from the crisis with something to the credit of our character as a nation.

Books and Men

EDWIN DROOD AGAIN.

A fatality has pursued the amateur novelists who have written continuations of Dickens's "The Mystery of Edwin Drood." Four writers have tried it, and their failures have been complete and rather ignominious. A humorist once confessed, in a newspaper rhyme, that he owned a pen which once had belonged to Thackeray. When he tried to write with it, however, not only did no inspiration come, but the pen sputtered and scratched, and actually refused to form words. It had recognized, he thought, a donkey, trying to imitate its master.

No expert novelist has ever tried to finish "Edwin Drood," in spite of the widespread notion that Wilkie Collins engaged in such an attempt. Scores of solutions have been offered, in the form of essays and articles, and two or three plays (one of them by Comyns Carr) enjoyed brief runs. The volumes bringing the story to an end are four, according to Mr. J. Cuming Walters, author of the interesting book, "The Complete Mystery of Edwin Drood." Mr. Walters was the prosecuting attorney in the mock trial held in London last January, when he failed to convict Jasper of murder in the first degree for killing Drood.

The first continuation appeared the very year of Dickens's death—1870. It was by "Orpheus C. Kerr" (Richard H. Newell),

and is said to be mainly burlesque and parody. The second and the third are also American productions. I have read, or have tried to read, both of them. Henry Morford's "John Jasper's Secret" was published in *Frank Leslie's Newspaper* and in *The Chimney Corner*, 1871-1872. Morford went to England with his wife, lived in Rochester and London to study the scenes of the novel, and made a conscientious effort to prepare himself for the work. To my mind it is the most readable, or the least unreadable, of the three I have seen. "An offensive fraud," writes Mr. Walters, "was, however, associated with it. No name was originally placed on the title-page, but the insidious announcement was made that the real authors were Charles Dickens's eldest son and Wilkie Collins. The lying rumor has been hard to overtake, and is still occasionally revived in spite of Collins's prompt repudiation, and Messrs. Chapman & Hall's explicit declaration in a letter to the *Times*. . . ."

The book was republished, within about a dozen years, bearing the imprint of a New York publisher, and unblushingly professing on its title-page to be by Charles Dickens "the Younger" and Wilkie Collins. How very respectable the operations of a burglar or a highwayman look in comparison with this kind of cheat! Many persons are convinced that "Edwin Drood" was really completed by Wilkie Collins and by Dickens's son; the book is sometimes so entered in catalogues.

The third continuation was the famous "Spirit Pen" volume. In this country, at any rate, the existence of such a book is known to hundreds who have read neither it nor the genuine novel by Dickens. "The Mystery of Edwin Drood Complete. Part the Second, By the Spirit Pen of Charles Dickens, through a Medium," came from Brattleboro, Vermont, in 1875. It is one of the many painful disclosures that spirit pens are usually not only less gifted than physical ones, but are frequently not even able to write anything approaching common-sense. It must require great physical endurance to wade through the mass of bosh in the "Spirit Pen" continuation of "Edwin Drood."

The fourth, and apparently the last, continuation was by an English woman, Mrs. Richard Newton. She wrote (in 1878) under the pen-name of "Gillan Vase," and called her book "A Great Mystery Solved; being a Sequel to 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood.'" This is now republished, with no important change of title, by McBride, Nast & Co. (\$1.50 net). It is edited by Shirley Byron Jerons, who contributes a summary of the original novel. Only the author's pseudonym appears in the book.

Of "Gillan Vase's" original work Mr. Walters writes that it has many merits and also conspicuous defects. In the first place, he says, it is far too long. "What Dickens intended to conclude in six more numbers ought not to have been concluded by another author in three volumes of over three