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Reply to the German Professors by British Scholars.

We see with regret the names of many German professors and men of science, whom we regard with respect and, in some cases, with personal friendship, appended to a denunciation of Great Britain so utterly baseless that we can hardly believe that it expresses their spontaneous or considered opinion. We do not question for a moment their personal sincerity when they express their horror of war and their zeal for "the achievements of culture." Yet we are bound to point out that a very different view of war, and of national aggrandizement based on the threat of war, has been advocated by such influential writers as Nietzsche, von Treitschke, von Bülow, and von Bernhardt, and has received widespread support from the press and from public opinion in Germany. This has not occurred, and in our judgment would scarcely be possible, in any other civilized country. We must also remark that it is German armies alone which have, at the present time, deliberately destroyed or bombarded such monuments of human culture as the Library at Louvain and the Cathedrals at Rheims and Malines.

The Diplomatic Papers.

No doubt it is hard for human beings to weigh justly their country's quarrels; perhaps particularly hard for Germans, who have been reared in an atmosphere of devotion to their Kaiser and his army; who are feeling acutely at the present hour, and who live under a Government which, we believe, does not allow them to know the truth. Yet it is the duty of learned men to make sure of their facts. The German "White Book" contains only some scanty and carefully explained selections from the diplomatic correspondence which preceded this war. And we venture to hope that our German colleagues will sooner or later do their best to get access to the full correspondence, and will form there from an independent judgment.

They will then see that, from the issue of the Austrian note to Serbia onward, Great Britain, whom they accuse of causing this war, strove incessantly for peace, Her successive proposals were supported by France, Russia, and Italy, but, unfortunately, not by the one power which could by a single word at Vienna have made peace certain. Germany, in her own official defense—incomplete as that document is—does not pretend that she strove for peace; she only strove for "the localization of the conflict." She claimed that Austria should be left free to "chastise" Serbia in whatever way she chose. At most she proposed that Austria should not annex a portion of Serbian territory—a futile provision, since the execution of Austria's demand would have made the whole of Serbia subject to her will.

Great Britain, like the rest of Europe, recognized that, whatever just grounds of complaint Austria may have had, the unprecedented terms of her note to Serbia constituted a challenge to Russia and a provocation to war. The Austrian Emperor in his proclamation admitted that war was likely to ensue. The German "White Book" states in so many words: "We were perfectly aware that a possible warlike attitude of Austria-Hungary against Serbia might bring Russia upon the field and therefore involve us in war. We could not, however, advise our ally

to take a yielding attitude not compatible with his dignity." The German Government admits having known the tenor of the Austrian note beforehand, when it was concealed from all the other powers; admits backing it up after it was issued; admits that it knew the note was likely to precipitate war; and admits that, whatever professions it made to the other powers, in private it did not advise Austria to abate one jot of her demands. This, to our minds, is tantamount to admitting that Germany has, together with her unfortunate ally, deliberately provoked the present war.

One point we freely admit. Germany would very likely have preferred not to fight Great Britain at this moment. She would have preferred to weaken and humiliate Russia; to make Serbia a dependent of Austria; to render France innocuous and Belgium subservient; and then, having established an overwhelming advantage, to settle accounts with Great Britain. Her grievance against us is that we did not allow her to do this.

Britain's Love of Peace.

So deeply rooted is Great Britain's love of peace, so influential among us are those who have labored through many difficult years to promote good feeling between this country and Germany, that, in spite of our ties of friendship with France, in spite of the manifest danger threatening ourselves, there was still, up to the last moment, a strong desire to preserve British neutrality, if it could be preserved without dishonor. But Germany herself made this impossible.

Great Britain, together with France, Russia, Prussia, and Austria, had solemnly guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium. In the preservation of this neutrality our deepest sentiments and our most vital interests are alike involved. Its violation would not only shatter the independence of Belgium itself: it would undermine the whole basis which renders possible the neutrality of any State and the very existence of such States as are much weaker than their neighbors. We acted in 1914 just as we acted in 1870. We sought from both France and Germany assurances that they would respect Belgian neutrality. In 1870 both powers assured us of their good intentions, and both kept their promises. In 1914 France gave immediately, on July 31, the required assurance; Germany refused to answer. When, after this sinister silence, Germany proceeded to break under our eyes the treaty which we and she had both signed, evidently expecting Great Britain to be her timid accomplice, then even to the most peace-loving Englishman hesitation became impossible. Belgium had appealed to Great Britain to keep her word, and she kept it.

The German professors appear to think that Germany has in this matter some considerable body of sympathizers in the universities of Great Britain. They are gravely mistaken. Never within our lifetime has this country been so united on any great political issue. We ourselves have a real and deep admiration for German scholarship and science. We have many ties with Germany, ties of comradeship, of respect, and of affection. We grieve profoundly that, under the baleful influence of a military system and its lawless dreams of conquest, she whom we once honored now stands revealed as the common enemy of Europe and of all peoples which respect the law of nations. We must carry on the war on which we have entered. For us, as for Belgium, it is a war of defense, waged for liberty and peace.

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