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JOURNAL OF
THE TRANSACTIONS
OF
The Victoria Institute,
OR,
Philosophical Society of Great Britain.

SECRETARY: E. WALTER MAUNDER, F.R.A.S.

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1916.

579TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING.

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,
WESTMINSTER, ON MONDAY, APRIL 3RD, 1916,
AT 4.30 P.M.

THE REV. H. J. R. MARSTON, M.A., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the preceding Meeting were read and confirmed.

The SECRETARY announced that Col. J. E. Broadbent, C.B., R.E., Associate of the Institute, had been elected a Member.

The CHAIRMAN asked the Rev. D. S. Margoliouth, Laudian Professor of Arabic in the University of Oxford, to address the Meeting on "The Influence of German Philosophy in bringing about the Great War."

THE INFLUENCE OF GERMAN PHILOSOPHY IN BRINGING ABOUT THE GREAT WAR. By the Rev. D. S. MARGOLIOUTH, D.Litt., F.B.A., Laudian Professor of Arabic in the University of Oxford.

WHEN some unexpected disaster befalls the world there is a general desire to find a reason for it, and men are often for a time satisfied with causes which are not really adequate to the result. Thus Carlyle tells us* that the French Revolution was attributed by some thinkers to Queen Marie Antoinette's want of etiquette; once, when her carriage broke down, she entered a hackney-coach; she would walk, too, at Trianon in mere straw hat and perhaps muslin gown. Hence, the knot of etiquette being loosed, the frame of society broke up, and those astonishing horrors of the French Revolution supervened. The Reign of Terror, according to this, was produced by Marie Antoinette's straw hat and muslin gown! Now the Kaiser's ultimatum, which transformed a peaceful and progressive world into a scene of internecine strife and desolation, with a general relapse into savagery, was expected to about the same extent as the French Revolution was expected; only to the furthest sighted and the best informed did it fail to come as a complete surprise. Among the causes popularly assigned is the corruption of the German mind by philosophers, of whom three have been generally named—Bernhardi, the

* *The Diamond Necklace* in *Miscellaneous Essays*.

apostle of German militarism; Treitschke, the prophet of Prussian Imperialism; and Nietzsche, the inventor of the Superman, the champion of unrestrained passion. Booksellers inform us that the interest in these personages and their opinions has of late cooled in this country; possibly their guilt is so thoroughly ascertained that further discussion of the matter is unnecessary; and, indeed, in a book which is likely to count as one of the curiosities of the War, called *War Letters from a Living Dead Man*,* the ghost of Nietzsche is introduced confessing as follows: *I have corrupted a whole people, and led them to their ruin; I thought to remedy their spinelessness, and, following me with characteristic thoroughness, they have become all spine; they have neither heart nor bowels. I preached Beyond Man; they have practised below man.* After severe handling by his cross-examiner, Nietzsche's ghost is dismissed with an order to be born again and teach a different gospel. It should be added that the authoress does not assert positively that this order will be obeyed. In the following interview the Prince of Darkness acknowledges that it was he who inspired Nietzsche to preach Beyond Man to the Germans, who could only choose evil when they believed themselves to be strong. In the most recent treatise which I have seen on this subject (*Religion in Europe and the World Crisis*, by the Rev. C. E. Osborne) Nietzsche, with Treitschke and Bernhardt, plays an important part, but the author states expressly that "Nietzsche was in reality no direct cause of the War, even in the sense in which a man's ideals cause a nation's action, for he disliked the present Kaiser; he wrote rudely of Treitschke, the real protagonist of the Hohenzollerns; he hated Bismarck; he loathed Prussia, and was by race partly a Slav." This author then shifts the blame from Nietzsche's shoulders to those of Treitschke. In another publication of the last few weeks (*Degenerate Germany*, by Henry de Halsalle) neither of these writers obtains more than a passing mention, the author being concerned with demonstrating the general depravity of the German character, so far as it can be historically traced. Possibly most of us have got to regard the War so much as our normal environment that we have ceased to trouble about its causes; the beginning now lies in the almost-forgotten past, and our interest is concentrated on the possibility of an end. Still, as the *Philosophical Society of Great Britain*, this Institute desired to have a discus-

* By Elsa Barker Rider, 1915, p. 276.

sion on this subject this session, and invited me to open it. The form which my remarks will take is that of considerations on two works of authority which are before the public, the treatise by Professor Muirhead of Birmingham, called *German Philosophy and the War*, and the account of the same which is to be found in the popular work of Dr. Thomas Smith, called *The Soul of Germany*. Both these writers furnish valuable guidance; and Dr. Smith, besides profound acquaintance with German literature, has the advantage of having lived for many years in Germany as a university professor, whence he is better able than most to judge what works have really influenced German opinion. He evidently agrees besides with those of the ancients who rejected the maxim which bids us treat our friends as potential enemies and our enemies as potential friends. For his account of the German soul is painted in the blackest colours.

These two authorities agree in eliminating the name of Bernhardi as the spokesman of the military party, and as in general little read or regarded in Germany outside that party; and in the powerfully written work *J'Accuse* extracts were given from this author's books as a semi-official statement of the intentions and aims of the German Government. Dr. Smith observes that Bernhardi's book was regarded in German military circles as a clumsy betrayal of official designs, and he doubts whether one in a thousand Germans had heard Bernhardi's name before the War. A story was current in its early months that a neutral who was present at a meeting of theologians in Berlin found the name of Bernhardi, so familiar then in England, was unknown to men of high eminence in the literary world of the German capital.

The name of Treitschke, who died in 1896, was indeed known in historical circles throughout Europe before the War, and though in these quickly moving times it might seem something like an anachronism to make a man responsible for a War that broke out eighteen years after his demise, Dr. Smith points out that Treitschke's works are used as class-books in the schools, whence every educated German comes under his influence. The figures which he gives are interesting: in 1911 there were over 300,000 German boys between the ages of ten and twenty in the State secondary schools and 212,000 pupils in secondary schools for girls. If Treitschke's works were put into the hands of all these students, it is reasonable to suppose that his influence spread widely over the German nation. Still, in his case, as in that of Bernhardi, we have rather an exponent of official

opinions than the originator of a system.* Treitschke's opinions have reference to a state of affairs resulting from the Franco-Prussian War rather than to the problems of our own time. He was the apostle of German unity under Prussian hegemony and of Hohenzollern autocracy. In a recently translated volume of Treitschke's essays we have what may be presumed to be his mature opinions, of which a specimen may be quoted: *The new German Imperialism has renounced the theocratic claim to world dominion which was made by the Holy Roman Empire, but in the actual world of every day it has established more firmly than ever the monarchical powers that attached to the old Imperial rule. In a monarchy the will of the State finds direct expression in the determinations of an independent head of the executive, whereas in a republic it finds expression as the outcome of the struggles of parties and of the estates of the realm. An application of these considerations to modern German conditions renders incontestable the monarchical character of the German Empire; every fresh political task imposed upon our people by the progress of history inevitably strengthens the monarchical authority of our Emperor. Now, a man may at once be the spokesman of a Government, and be expressing opinions in which he himself sincerely believes; yet in any case it is the Government rather than he who is responsible for them. And the impression which these essays leave on the mind is that their author is putting forward matter which his Government desired him to put forward, and its interest is mainly for the home politics of Germany. He expressly distinguishes the German Empire from such federations as those of Switzerland and the United States on the ground that the constitution of these two Federal States rests upon the equality of all members of the Federal Union, but the German Imperial constitution rests upon inequality, the preponderant power of Prussia. To the Crown of this leading State is attached an hereditary right to the Imperial throne, and there is attached also a monarchical dominion which, though still incomplete in form, grows stronger daily under our very eyes. In all matters of decisive importance Prussia has the determining voice. This is because the Prussian eagle alone is able to keep his grip of what he has once pounced on. But both in the passage cited above and elsewhere Treitschke, doubtless in accordance*

* In Dr. Smith's more recent work, called *What Germany Thinks*, he insists, with knowledge based on experience, upon the fact that the German professor of history, such as Treitschke was, is merely a mouthpiece for the Government.

with official instruction, disclaims the idea of a German world-Empire. *We desire to renew the power and glory of the Hohenstaufens and the Ottos, but not their world-Empire. The intention of our new State is to be an honest neighbour to every foreign nationality, a grasping adversary to none.*

The matter contained in this volume is mainly of a sort whereon it is unnecessary for an outsider to have an opinion; though the author's political wisdom may be doubted, if wisdom means accurate calculation of the effects to be produced by certain lines of action. Thus he foresees that *the people of Alsace will learn to love us (the Prussians) when the strong hand of Prussia has educated them*; it may be doubted whether that prophecy even began to be fulfilled. *Prussia, he said, has offered peace to the continent not by means of the panacea of the pacifists, disarming, but by the exact opposite—universal arming; Germany's example compelled nations to become armies, and consequently war to become a dangerous experiment.* The result has unfortunately not been the abolition of war, but an increase in its horrors; just as if a man with the view of avoiding fire should pile up explosives. And indeed, in his lectures on Politics, he asserted with justice that the real war wherein Germany engaged would be the first war of nations, and would in consequence of that fact and of the scientific developments of the military engines be more terrible in its results than any preceding war. What he, Treitschke, further maintained is that force must keep what force has won, and Germany was forced to arm to the teeth and remain so armed for fear lest the provinces which she had torn from her neighbours should be reclaimed. The view taken by the inhabitants of those provinces did not seem to Treitschke to matter. *In view of our obligation to secure the peace of the world, who will venture to object that the people of Alsace and Lorraine do not want to belong to us? We Germans, who know Germany and France, know better than these unfortunates themselves what is good for the people of Alsace; against their will we will restore them to their true selves. We appeal from the mistaken wishes of the men who are there to-day to the wishes of those who were there before them.* Treitschke, however, proceeds to add that it is not the object of this national policy to force every strip of German soil which they ever gave up in the days of their weakness back again into their new empire. It would seem to follow logically from his principles that this should be done; yet in the essays he disclaims the idea of annexing Holland and German Switzerland, and in the lectures is prepared to leave Switzerland alone, though he

hopes Holland may at some time or other again become German. Clearly here as elsewhere Treitschke is speaking not as a political philosopher, who aims at the enucleation of general principles, but as a politician, whose business it is to defend the action which his government for the time wishes to be defended.

Some years after Treitschke's death his lectures on politics were collected and published. Attempts have been made to show that these lectures, which, owing to their author's great powers as a speaker, were very well attended during his lifetime, contain immoral doctrines. It is from this work that Dr. Smith quotes the maxim that treaties are made with the tacit understanding that they are only to be observed rigidly *rebus sic stantibus*, while the conditions under which they were made remain unchanged. It is worthy of note that precisely this doctrine is asserted by Bismarck in his *Personal Reminiscences*. The context wherein Treitschke formulates the principle has reference to the case wherein humiliating conditions have been imposed by one nation on a defeated foe; and it is urged that a treaty containing such conditions should be denounced by the latter so soon as he finds himself strong enough to do so. Treitschke, who so earnestly demanded the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine, urges in his lectures the undesirability of enforcing humiliating conditions on the conquered; and recommends the maintenance of strict good faith on the part of a State in international dealings with a view to inspiring confidence. It seems, then, very doubtful whether his authority can be quoted for the treatment of state contracts as scraps of paper. To denounce a treaty is not the same as to violate it.

On the whole it would not be easy for an impartial reader of this treatise to condemn it as seriously immoral or likely to corrupt the hearer, though complete agreement with all the propositions which it contains might not be expected from those whose patriotism attaches them to some other constitution than that of Imperial Germany. Treitschke is an admirer of Hohenzollern absolutism, and ridicules the limited monarchy of Britain; an English lecturer on politics would probably take the converse view. He is an admirer of the great as opposed to the small state on a variety of grounds; a Swiss or Dutch lecturer might think otherwise. He vehemently attacks the British theory of maritime law, but ascribes this to no inborn wickedness on the part of the British; the Germans, he admits, would in the like circumstances have adopted a similar line. He is a believer in the need of colonies for a really great empire, and holds that such a colonial empire can only be maintained by the aid of a fleet.

With regard to the passages in this book which have been quoted in glorification of war, it does not appear that Treitschke does much more than assert what seems at least a tenable view, viz., that so long as human nature is radically unchanged, wars will not cease. It would, however, be easy to quote passages from his work wherein this fact is regarded not as welcome but as disastrous; and when he speaks of war as an ordinance of God, this appears to be an inference from the fact that mankind has had no respite from war, or only brief respite, for the period wherein history is recorded. To say that this condition of things is divinely ordained need not be interpreted as a justification of it, or as implying that it is desirable; it follows from Treitschke's belief that a single world-state is impossible, and that separate States must have conflicting interests which can only be settled by war.

One who takes the trouble to verify the quotations from the politics of Treitschke which are given by Dr. Smith will find that the English writer has weakened his case by quoting unfairly; though it may be admitted that Treitschke cannot be exculpated completely from the charge of unduly glorifying war. It may also be admitted that he harboured—probably owing to instructions from his government—ambitions which could not fail at some time to lead to European war; for he openly expresses the hope that Germany may ultimately become supreme at sea, and he holds that Holland must be forced somehow into the German *Zollverein*, so that the whole Rhine may be German. One, however, who reads what Treitschke has to say about the relation between political and civil morality will find little difference between the line which he takes and that taken by other writers who have dealt with this difficult subject. The morality of a State is not the same as the morality of the individual, and the individual must, according to most systems, subordinate his conscience frequently to that of the State; the difficulty lies in determining the degree of violation which justifies rebellion or even passive resistance. It may well be the case that Treitschke has permitted the State too much licence, and unreasonably restricted the liberty of the individual. Nor does the reader quite savour the appreciation of Machiavelli with which his system starts.

We approach more nearly to the field of philosophy when we come to the name of Friedrich Nietzsche. In making him responsible for the war we are confronted at the outset by a difficulty noticed by Professor Muirhead, viz., that his works have probably had as many admirers in England as in Germany.

To what circumstance they owe their popularity it might be hard to say; possibly the mode of expression has something to do with it: many of the volumes take the form of fairly brief aphorisms, which Bacon appears to have thought the correct form for philosophical utterances; the intellectual effort required for their perusal is certainly smaller than that demanded by what is continuous and systematic; and they contain a judicious mixture of the paradoxical with the commonplace. But it is difficult to suppose that they have had any serious political influence in either the one country or the other.

It is further to be noticed that Nietzsche is by no means an apostle of either German Kultur or German aggression. He appears to be in favour of a united Europe and to regard nationalism as a serious mistake. His words on the subject are as follows: (*Jenseits von Gut und Bose* 228): *Thanks to the feverish estrangement which the nationalist craze has set and is still setting between the nations of Europe, thanks moreover to shortsighted politicians who at present by the aid of hasty methods have the upper hand and have no notion that the separatist policy which they favour can only be a temporary policy—thanks to all this and much which may not now be expressed, men overlook or arbitrarily and mendaciously misinterpret the most unambiguous signs wherein it is clearly expressed that Europe means to be one. With all the deeper and more comprehensive personages of this century the actual and common tendency in the secret labour of the soul has been to prepare the way for that new synthesis and anticipate tentatively what the future European is to execute; only ostensibly or in their weaker hours, or in their old age did they belong to their fatherlands; if ever they became patriots, they were taking a holiday from their real selves.* In the same passage Nietzsche admits that the Germans are nearer the barbarous state than the French, and asserts that France is still the seat of the most spiritual and the most refined European culture. The axiom of historic justice which, he says, must be firmly maintained and defended against illusion is this: European noblesse, of sentiment, taste and morals, in short in every sense of the word, is the work and the discovery of France; whereas European vulgarity, the plebeianism of modern ideas, is that of England. Treitschke is mentioned by him in a context which indicates anything but approval: *One must be prepared, he says, to find many a cloud and many a disturbance, and many a slight attack of stultification pass over a nation which suffers and wishes to suffer from national nervous fever and political ambition; as, for example, among the Germans of to-day, now the anti-French craze, now the anti-Polish, now the*

Christian-romantic, now the Wagnerian, now the Teutonic, now the Prussian; only look at these poor historians, the Sybels, Treitschkes, and their thickly tied-up heads; these are all slight overcloudings of the German mind and conscience. The very cause which is associated with the teaching of Treitschke is, then, in the opinion of this philosopher, an overclouding of the German mind and conscience, and Treitschke himself a poor creature, a Prusso-maniac. It seems hard, then, to associate Nietzsche with the very ideas which, in his opinion, were stupid and criminal, and contrary to what in his view had been the common aim of the great men of Germany and France.

To find any passage in Nietzsche's works wherein the domination by Germany of Europe and the world is either foretold or desired might be difficult. One sentence which is of some interest may be quoted. *The deep, icy mistrust which is aroused by the German so soon as he comes to power, even in these days, is an echo of that inextinguishable horror wherewith Europe for centuries looked on at the raging of the German monster—though between the ancient Germans and the Germans of to-day there is scarcely any relationship of ideas, not to speak of a relationship of blood.* Had Nietzsche lived to see the present war and retained his mental power sufficiently to watch its progress, he would have thought better of his countrymen. His main political theory appears to be that what he calls the "slave morality"—i.e., the introduction of a system of order and justice to which all have to submit, and which reduces the wild noble to the condition of the tame plebeian or slave—is the work of the Jews; they represent that false slave morality which has hitherto triumphed. Now he regards the Germans of his time as possessed of kindred gifts with the Jews; *the Jews were the priestly nation of resentment par excellence in whom dwelt an incomparable genius for popular morality; you have only to compare with them the nations with kindred gifts—e.g., the Chinese or the Germans, to perceive what is of the first and what of the fifth rank.* The work in which these ideas are stated most forcibly ends with a confession that he desires to see something, but he leaves it to his reader to guess what.

In another of his works Nietzsche expresses the hope that the Germans might yet have the honour to be the first un-Christian nation in Europe, pointing out how Schopenhauer had already remarked that they possessed in a high degree the necessary qualifications, and honoured them on that account. And one most noteworthy difference between Nietzsche and Treitschke is their attitude on the subject of religion. Treitschke

in his writings regularly speaks as a Christian and a Protestant ; one of the recently translated essays is an appreciation of the work of Luther. A sentence or two may be quoted, not in order to ridicule what they contain, but rather to indicate the historian's views. *We have to thank the Reformation for enabling the German to think both piously and independently, for permitting not one of our great thinkers, however bold his flight, to fall into the blasphemous mockery of a Voltaire and for causing the mortal sin of hypocrisy to be almost unknown amongst us. Herein lies the greatness of Protestantism : it will not suffer a contradiction to exist between thinking and willing, between religion and moral life.* According to this Nietzsche should not count among the great thinkers of Germany, for in his blasphemous mockery he is certainly not inferior to Voltaire. He expresses himself as follows concerning Luther and the Reformation: *that Luther's reformation succeeded in the North is a sign that the North was backward as compared with the South of Europe, and, indeed, no Christianization of Europe would have taken place had not the culture of the old southern world been barbarized by an excessive mixture of barbarous German blood, and so lost its preponderant civilization.* So far as he has any religious sympathy it is with paganism. It would, however, shock the audience to quote much of what this writer says on the subject of religious belief. One paragraph may, perhaps, be translated : *The most important of recent events, that God is dead, that the belief in the Christian deity has become incredible—has already begun to cast its shadow over Europe. For the few at least whose eyes and the suspicion therein are strong and subtle enough for this spectacle some sort of sun seems to have gone down, some old and profound conviction to have been transformed into a doubt ; to them our old world must seem daily more eveninglike, suspicious, strange and old. In the main, however, we may say: the event itself is far too great, distant, removed from the comprehension of many, for even the news thereof to be correctly described as having reached them : far less can it be said that many already know the import of this event, or all that must now collapse owing to that belief having been undermined ; as having been built on that belief, supported thereby and grown thereinto—e.g., the whole system of European morals. Of this long series and combination of breach, destruction, ruin, collapse, which awaits us, who can to-day guess enough to count as the teacher and harbinger of this monstrous logic of terrors, as the prophet of a darkness and a solar eclipse the like of which has never yet taken place on earth ? . . . In fact we philosophers and freethinkers at this news that the old God is dead feel as though a new dawn*

beamed upon us; our heart overflows thereby with thankfulness, astonishment, anticipation, expectation; at last our horizon appears free, and even though it be not bright, our ships can at last take to the sea ready for any enterprise; every adventure is permitted to the researcher; the sea, our sea lies open before us; never, perhaps, was there such freedom of the seas.

One almost wonders that it did not occur to a classical scholar, such as Nietzsche was to a certain extent, that all this had been said before. Long before the Christian era men dilated on the wonderful consequences which would arise from the liberation of men's minds from the fear of the gods; the consequences were never realised, because, on the one hand, they never were liberated from that fear, and, on the other, nature has provided that without the observation of a certain code of morals no community can subsist; the members of a society must have rights, and these rights are correlative with duties. The days when scientific inquiry was hampered in any way whatever by religious belief had passed away long before Nietzsche entered the world. It is not, therefore, clear either what was the catastrophe which he claimed to announce or what was the brilliant prospect which dawned on his horizon. The general break-up of European morality could not very well lead to that union of Europe which he desired.

It seems true that, so far as anything consistent can be made out of Nietzsche's ravings, they tend to the glorification of unbridled force and to the ridicule of the subordination of force to other considerations. His notion of the *superman*, a kind of Achilles who denies that laws were meant for him, and claims everything for armed might, has attracted a good deal of attention, and just as it has been exploited to the detriment of Christianity, so it has been exploited to the detriment of Islam; yet the superman appears to be as much a creature of the imagination as Rousseau's noble savage. In order to obtain from Nietzsche's superman the theory of an aggressive and all-absorbing empire, Mr. Muirhead admits that a step has to be taken. *Let Nietzsche's ego be interpreted in terms of the nation and clothed with the power of the State; let it come to be taught in high places with all the fervour of prophecy that it was from the German nation that the Superman was destined to appear, while upon its chief enemies in the direction in which its hopes were set decay had already set her mark; finally, let it be announced, with all the authority of expert knowledge, that the hour was about to strike, and it is not difficult to see what the harvest of this long sowing was likely to be.*

Professor Muirhead brings Nietzsche's ideas into the war by substituting a super-nation for a super-man. Dr. Smith's method is different. While making Treitschke responsible for the public acts of Germany, he makes Nietzsche responsible for the private degeneration of the people: "his moral philosophy is anti-altruistic, indeed a morality of self, a veritable self-cult." In his chapters on German life and institutions he shows, he says, how this poison has permeated modern Germany. The chief detail which he quotes from Nietzsche is the philosopher's treatment of womankind, but it is not quite clear that Dr. Smith can prove that Nietzsche's influence has been very considerable or even bad. His wisdom is in this case that of the East: woman is to be treated as a possession, as property that should be locked up, as something destined to servitude and finding its fulfilment therein. Now, that woman is more domestic in Germany than in this country is certainly not due to Nietzsche: this was a matter of common knowledge long before Nietzsche's name was ever heard. In his half a dozen pages of raving on the subject of the emancipation of woman he approaches the commonplace at one point; this is where he complains that though women for thousands of years have been in charge of the kitchen, yet they cannot cook; the carelessness wherewith they look after the family commissariat is, he says, horrible. A woman does not understand what is meant by food, and yet pretends to be a cook! This philosophical utterance is dated 1895. Dr. Smith, writing twenty years later, asserts that the German woman is better equipped for the kitchen than the drawing-room, the former being destined to be her realm, outside which she seldom shines. His words certainly imply that she shines in that, in which case Nietzsche may be credited with having produced an improvement in the standard of German domestic cookery. If this be so, it is certainly the only improvement produced by him in any region whatever.

His attack on womankind is probably no sillier than the bulk of his aphorisms, which are practically useless owing to the author taking no account of actuality, and making no endeavour to grapple with the real problems of society. If any of the ancient philosophers were equally immoral, they were at any rate vastly wiser. But the matter to which attention is here being drawn is that the mode wherein Dr. Smith conceives Nietzsche's influence to have made itself felt is different from that supposed by Professor Muirhead. Dr. Smith finds the results of Nietzsche's teaching in a variety of social evils characteristic of German life; taught by him that the

indulgence of passion is more noble than the restraint of it, the German behaves like a savage; if a Prussian finds a Bavarian train five minutes late, he, without considering the feelings of his fellow-travellers, talks of "this Bavarian pig-sty." This result would then seem to be like the dividing of Beelzebub's house against itself, which would cause his kingdom to fall. But that is a very different result from the organization of an empire into a vast military machine bent on crushing other empires and dominating the world. That attempt will, we hope and believe, fail, but the failure will not be a shameful one; its initial success and its ultimate failure will be both due to the fact that Nietzsche's absurdities have had no effect; that discipline and self-restraint, the virtues which he condemns, have on the one side and on the other enabled not only whole nations, but whole groups of nations to organize themselves, to subordinate not only personal but even national ambitions and aspirations to a common end. When Treitschke quotes the gospel in favour of his glorification of war, *greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend*, urging that such love is displayed by the soldier, we can follow him thus far, that the virtues which render success in war possible are encouraged by the Christian system, discouraged and ridiculed by the aphorisms of Nietzsche. The historian of materialism says with truth of the egoistic philosophy: *while the enormous development of material interests appears to constitute the predominating characteristic of our time; while the theory of that development has distinctly brought the principle of egoism into the foreground of the general consciousness: still there has simultaneously been an enhancement of the need for national unity, for social co-operation and for the fraternization of previously isolated elements; we can at present only guess which of these factors—the egoism or the co-operation—is destined to impress its character on the future. For the present we must maintain that if the egoism should at some time get the upper hand, this would not furnish a new constructive principle, but only a source of continuous disintegration.*

There is another noticeable difference between the views of Mr. Smith and Professor Muirhead. The latter distinguishes between the influence of the earlier philosophers and that of Nietzsche; "it is not in Hegelianism, but in the violent reaction against the whole Idealist philosophy that set in shortly after his death, that we have to look for philosophical foundations of present-day materialism." This writer's analysis then assumes an idealistic period beginning with Kant

and ending with Hegel, followed by a reaction, commencing with Schopenhauer and culminating in Nietzsche. Mr. Smith, on the other hand, traces the whole movement in its various phases to the first German philosopher of note—Immanuel Kant. The whole trend of his system, he says, is the freeing of the human mind, or *ego*, from the trammels of tradition and custom; and it may be certainly noted that Strauss, famous or notorious for the mythical theory of the Gospel history, compares the work which he had achieved with that of the founder of the so-called critical school. It had been the task of the one as of the other to convince the world that a certain number of supposed assets were worthless.

What rather appears from the history of thought in Germany as told by able expounders is on the one hand that great intellectual movements are international, and on the other that the practice and conduct of nations are affected by historical events and circumstances more than they are by speculative works. The development of industry, commerce, and the study of the physical sciences in Germany in the nineteenth century was parallel to the same in England and other countries, and had similar effects. That development, if it has not turned all mankind into materialists, has at least rendered the division between the physical and the metaphysical obscure, and the treatment which was possible in the days of Kant became out of date half-a-century later than his time. Kant's four metaphysical questions—the infinity of space and time, the ultimate divisibility of matter, the freedom of the will, and the existence of a first cause—even if they cannot be settled by experimental science, at any rate can no longer be discussed on purely *a priori* grounds when such sciences as palæontology, geology, anthropology, and statistics have been introduced, but the development of these studies has been international, and the histories of modern philosophy are forced to take account of the works and systems which simultaneously arose in many lands. Mr. Muirhead naturally and rightly assigns to the work of Darwin great influence on German thought; and the same is likely to be true of Herbert Spencer, who was perhaps more appreciated outside his own country than in it. Nietzsche himself goes so far as to state that these two, Darwin and Herbert Spencer, with a third English writer also in his opinion of moderate ability, John Stuart Mill, had come to dominate in the middle region of European taste. He also held that the domination of men of such moderate capacity had occasionally its utility. A genius of the first order (like

himself) could not be expected to ascertain the truth of a number of details, put them together and draw conclusions; such geniuses have something better to do than to ascertain anything—they have to be and signify something new, and present new values. The gulf between knowledge and ability is, he says, greater and more mysterious than is ordinarily supposed; the man of ability on a great scale, the creator, must possibly be ignorant, whereas for scientific discoveries such as Darwin's a certain narrowness, dryness, and industrious carefulness, in short something English, may well be of use.

This may be so; but though in Nietzsche's works the absence of accurate study and observation is very marked, the influence on his mind of the methods and results of Darwin and Herbert Spencer is very apparent, the chief difference being that whereas the English writers, like men of moderate ability, take some trouble to ascertain the facts whereon they base their generalizations, Nietzsche, like a man of genius, gets his facts out of his own consciousness. The notion, however, of a history of moral ideas in the animal world is certainly founded on the work of the English evolutionists.

But in the second place we are much more likely to overrate than to underrate the effect exercised on human conduct by speculative works, however popular. It appears to be true that occasionally the young are led to take serious or even fatal steps by what they read; thus attempted suicides have been justified by the teaching of Schopenhauer and von Hartmann; and the enormous sales of works by the latter, whose name in England is known only by specialists in philosophy, certainly indicate that in Germany there is a far greater taste for purely speculative works than there is in this country; this is a difference of national idiosyncrasy which does not admit of analysis. But the notion that any of these persons have by their writings and teachings affected the policy of the government and its bureaux cannot easily be admitted. In so instructive a work as *The Reflections and Reminiscences of Prince Bismarck* this element is left altogether out of account. The saying which Macaulay quotes from Frederick the Great that there was a satisfactory arrangement between the sovereign and his people whereby the latter might say what they liked, whereas the former might do what he liked, suits the facts so far as the philosophers are concerned. It is natural enough that men of ability such as Treitschke should be pressed into the service of the government, if they showed with their ability a readiness to defend Prussian absolutism in the first place and

the policy which the Prussian government adopted in the second place; but that absolutism and that policy are to be traced to causes far deeper than metaphysical speculations. And, as we have seen, if idealism gave way to materialism, it was not because speculation had taken of itself a particular direction, but because the advance of discovery in other fields had rendered the speculative systems inadequate and antiquated.

I hold, then, that the charge of having caused the war, brought against German philosophy, in the main breaks down. If Treitschke has corrupted the German mind, he has done so as the agent of the German government, whose views he officially expounded; there is little reason to suppose that the views were impressed by him on the government; the influence was the other way. It has not been shown that Nietzsche's doctrines bear any close relation to his, or that the works of this dreamer exercised any real influence on those persons in authority who are responsible for bringing on the war. There is, however, some importance in the statement quoted from the work of Mr. Smith, who traces to Kant the anti-ecclesiastical and indeed anti-Christian spirit which we associate with Germany. That Kant's chief work should have appealed to a wide audience is a strange fact, because in many ways it is repellent, and can scarcely be understood at all without a teacher's aid. It is reasonable to suppose that the comparative ease whereby it acquired the dignity of a classic was due to its claim to have upset all possible arguments for the existence of God. It did this, moreover, with an appearance of reverence and even of a strong bias in favour of religious belief which rendered it far more effective than works which display a bias in the contrary direction. Kant's editor, von Kirchmann, observes that he was alarmed by his own conclusions and endeavoured in subsequent works, which he to a certain extent promises in his first and chief work, to remedy this defect; if he had destroyed the traditional arguments for the belief in the existence of God, he hoped to supply one that was new; and he also urged that whereas he had shown that belief in God could not be grounded on *pure reason*, *disbelief could also not be grounded thereon*. It would seem that his attempt in a later work to repair this disaster at first met with some success, and according to contemporary accounts, Kant's theory, whereby the existence of God was to be proved from the conscience, became for a time a commonplace of the pulpit; ultimately it came to be regarded as a failure, whereas the original work retained its high

place in general estimation. The theory that philosophy is antagonistic to morality and religion cannot then very well be separated from the name of Kant, unwilling as he would have been to let that be said. His philosophy of religion when he attempted something positive was excessively feeble, and unworthy of the intellectual ability displayed in his chief work.

Probably, then, Mr. Smith is correct in tracing the negative attitude in matters of religion which is associated with Germany to the work of Kant; the notion that the conscience could be made a substitute for nature as a source of the knowledge of the creator was little calculated to be permanently maintained, and the Kantian metaphysics were supposed to have excluded the possibility of employing the old argument from the order of nature. *In a way, then*, the doctrines of Nietzsche are traceable to Kant, but whereas Nietzsche supposed that morality would collapse with the fall of religion, Kant supposed the basis of morality to be so firm that religion, and to some extent Christianity, could be built upon it.

We have, as has been seen, the high authority of Treitschke for the statement that the Prussian autocracy has steadily grown since the establishment of the German Empire; for the foreign policy of that empire the Prussian autocrat is directly responsible. Further, it is a maxim of Oriental statecraft, which if it knows little of other forms of government knows much about autocracies, that subjects are of the religion of their kings; that right and wrong have in such cases for the subjects the values which the autocrat assigns the words. The glorification of all sorts of outrages which has marked the German conduct of the war must also be laid to the Kaiser's charge. And it is noteworthy that the morality of Nietzsche himself would apparently have been scandalized by one characteristic of German foreign policy: this philosopher holds that his superman will scorn to lie. We have seen that the political theories of Treitschke exclude the erection of a world-empire; he holds such a notion to be chimerical, and bases his belief in the persistence of war on the fact that rival powers must always exist simultaneously, with conflicting interests incapable of being always harmonized by peaceful methods; and Nietzsche apparently wished nationality to be merged not in Germanism but in Europeanism, wherein the culture not of Germany but of France should be dominant. The idea then to which these philosophers give no countenance cannot be laid to

their charge; but may well have arisen in the mind of an autocrat, dissatisfied with the empire which he had inherited, however large, and intolerant of rival states. So many an autocrat has been led by his ambition to shed rivers of blood and bring ruin on his own and other peoples, that the recurrence of this phenomenon where the environment is favourable need occasion no surprise. Nor, indeed, if the history of Prussia from the time of Frederick the Great be studied, is there anything discordant with its traditional policy in what has occurred. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that those writers who have been sedulously employed in destroying all moral sanctions have been playing with fire and so cannot be freed from all responsibility for the conflagration.

DISCUSSION.

Professor LANGHORNE ORCHARD: Our very cordial thanks are due to the Author of this able Paper upon a subject of extraordinary interest and importance. In his helpful company, we have been able to make careful investigation into the cause or the causes of one of the gigantic Wars of History.

We shall probably conclude that the chief cause has been the false teaching of Nietzsche acting upon the love of dominance fostered by the Crown Prince and the German Military Party. This teaching had its way prepared by the so-called "Higher Criticism," which undermined in the belief of many people the spiritual and moral authority of the Bible. Then came the disparagement of conscience and the reception of a "philosophy" which is the negation of Christianity, which by its maxim—Do your enemy all the harm you can in every way, for the end justifies the means—enjoins falsehood and atrocities. Where the two writers, Professor Muirhead and Dr. Smith, cited by the Author, are at variance, it appears to me that the former is right. The attack on Kant must fail. The German Plato stood for GOD—the omniscient, almighty, moral Judge—and unswervingly advocated the absolute authority, the "Categorical Imperative," of Conscience.

Dr. SCHOFIELD: I should much like to ask Professor Margoliouth one question. He dismissed Bernhardt as a negligible quantity in this war, and spoke chiefly of Treitschke and Nietzsche. He will agree that the former is the one who outwardly most fostered the war, and particularly in its extraordinary animus against this

country, where, indeed, he himself resided for many years. He is the ostensible provocative agent most in evidence, and as the Professor regards him as practically the mouthpiece of the Government, this is only what could be expected. But the question I wished to ask was about Nietzsche. While we must agree that his writings are not especially addressed to Germany, and that he himself was not a German professor at all, nor an admirer of Treitschke, may not his remarkable works be a powerful, though indirect, cause of this war? He was an anti-socialist and did not trouble about the masses at all. His plan was to create a dominant race of absolutely anti-Christian and non-moral supermen, who by brute force should possess at any rate Europe, and it would appear that in Germany alone was this concept swallowed with avidity. These world-rulers of Nietzsche, being anti-Christian, can be called nothing but "world-rulers of darkness," and, as we know, this expression is found in St. Paul's Ephesian letter; there are those in this room who, like myself, believe that for the real cause and power behind this war we must look to the spirit world, and I would ask the Professor whether, looking at it even behind the visible, the very spirit that energized Nietzsche may not be the spirit that is prosecuting this war, using the Kaiser and others as its tools?

The Rev. GRAHAM BARTON urged that the philosophers had no very great effect upon the nations at large. Thus when philosophers like Seneca were teaching, the nations amongst whom they taught were sunk in barbarism. Nietzsche was an iconoclast, desirous of destroying Christianity and civilization, and of bringing in a new condition of things. But the doctrine of force was inherent in the German people: it had been a potential energy for more than forty years, and had now become dynamic.

The Rev. J. J. B. COLES said that we had no adequate explanation of the time in which we were now living. We believed that God overruled events, even when He did not directly interfere with the actions of men. In the last hundred years they had seen a great break-up of European society, a break-up which had extended to America. It seemed to him that this had been prefigured in the prophecy of the fourth beast, which was contained in the seventh chapter of the book of Daniel.

Archdeacon POTTER said that they were much indebted to the Lecturer for throwing light on this important subject.

The War was not caused by the need for German expansion. She had colonies, and sent a very small German population to them. In the five years between 1908 and 1913 her total emigration averaged 23,000 per annum, while that of other nations from her ports was 215,000.

Nietzsche, as the Lecturer said, had not a large influence in his time in Germany. He was a professor in Switzerland, yet he led the anti-Christian philosophy which fitted in with German materialism. He perverted Darwinism, and established as the motive force which produces the superman the principle of the Will to Power, which Germans had now adopted as their dominating guide. Nietzsche was confessedly anti-Christian, and rejoiced in making war, not only against Christian dogma, but Christian morals.

Treitschke, however, was much more the paid exponent of Imperial and militarist views, having been Professor at Freiburg, Heidelberg, and Berlin from 1863 to 1896. He enunciated clearly the principle which he was paid to put forth: "that we must distinguish between private and public morality," "that duties obligatory for the individual are not to be thought of by the State," the same teaching as was enunciated by the Kaiser to his soldiers at Bremerhaven on July 27, 1900, when he said: "Quarter is not to be given, prisoners are not to be made." Treitschke called himself religious, but clearly stated that he considered religion useful mainly in keeping the "under dog" down, by holding before him the hope of compensation in a future life.

The real causes of the War were (1) German materialism, fostered by commercial success and by non-moral teaching; (2) the Kaiser willed the War from the time when he dismissed Bismarck. A year after, he refused to renew the entente between Germany and Russia; and Bismarck then foretold that this would eventually lead to a union against Germany of England, France and Russia.

The Kaiser and his militarist clique deliberately poisoned the German mind, with the aid of men like Treitschke. "One must seek," said Baron Beyens, "the origin and permanence of the German feeling of hatred against England and France in the historical education given in the universities at the instigation of the Prussian historical school from Niebuhr, Ranken, Mommsen, Sybel, to Treitschke, Giesebrecht, Häusser, Droysen, Lamprecht, and Delbrück."

The Rev. MARTIN ANSTEY pointed out that ideas were the precursors of history. Thus the idea of the equality of men led up to the French Revolution. So Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power had brought about the present cataclysm. There was a necessary reciprocity between thought and action, and thought was determined by the will.

Mr. M. L. ROUSE remarked that the meaning frequently attached to "Deutschland ueber Alles" was unfair to the Germans. That motto did not mean that Germany was to be over all other nations, but that Germany was to be considered by Germans before all their private interests: in itself a noble sentiment for a German to entertain.

Mr. Rouse then proceeded to give a number of instances from his own experience of Germany to show how in the last fifty years there had been a great falling off from the Christian faith and a great spread of rationalism and indifference to religion.

The CHAIRMAN expressed his great regret that the Lecturer had been obliged to leave before the Discussion. They were indebted to him for a most thoughtful and instructive paper, and he would ask the Meeting to return their warmest thanks.

The vote was carried by acclamation, and the Meeting adjourned at 6.10 p.m.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION.

Mr. EDWARD J. G. TITTERINGTON writes: The attempt has been made in some quarters (though not in this lecture) to fix the responsibility for the Great War upon the philosophers of modern Germany. If it is meant by this that the German spirit is the creation of their philosophers, the attempt seems to be in the highest degree unhistorical. We have only to read our daily press to be reminded of the Prussian excesses in warfare and diplomacy in centuries past; and even the commercial policy and business methods of Germany are no new thing. Have we quite forgotten—or are we ignorant of—the Hanseatic League?

Even if the War could successfully be brought home to the philosophers, we have not yet found the origin of the War. For the philosophers themselves require an explanation. We have the phenomenon that Germany has produced, not one, but a number of materialistic teachers, who, while differing in many important

respects, yet agree in this, that there is a common trend, or perhaps rather a common spirit, pervading their teachings. If there were one or two only, they could be explained away as a kind of philosophical sport, or *lusus naturae*; but this is not the case. Are we not compelled to the conclusion that the philosophers of Germany are a product of the spirit of Germany, and not its cause: a natural outgrowth from among the people themselves, but reacting in greater or less degree, both directly and indirectly, upon the mass of which they form a part?

What, then, is the precise measure of this reaction? A young German once informed me that the influence of Nietzsche, Treitschke, and Bernhardi was quite misconceived and exaggerated in England. Bernhardi was, until quite recently, unknown in his own country. Nietzsche appealed only to a small intellectual class. Treitschke was a "mere Prussian," the mouthpiece of a political party. Perhaps this statement errs in the other direction. Is it not true that at all times the philosophers of the world appeal directly to a limited class, and that to the mass of the people they are unintelligible? But it is those who pass their teachings on in a digested form, and popularize them, who succeed in giving them publicity, and the teachings are thus imbibed indirectly by a very large number who would never think of reading the originals. Especially is this the case when—as there seems to be some evidence has happened in Germany—systematic means are taken, through the schools and universities especially, to produce precisely this effect.

If these conclusions are sound, the real influence of German philosophers would seem to be in the direction, not of the *creation* of a German spirit, but of giving expression to a spirit which was already in existence, and of furnishing the powers in authority with a ready tool for furthering their own ends. And this is, I think, the conclusion to which Professor Margoliouth has tried to bring us.