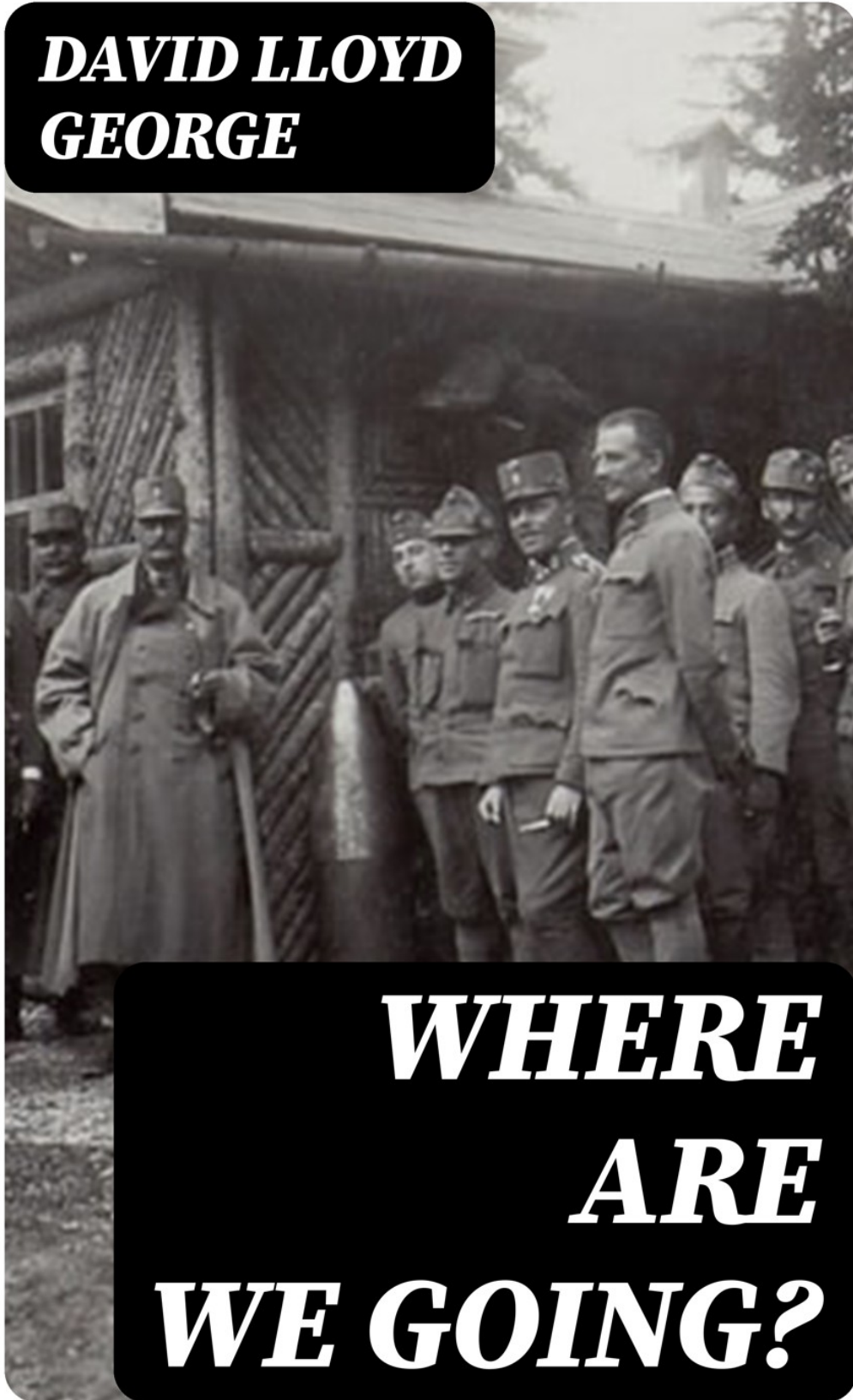


**DAVID LLOYD
GEORGE**



**WHERE
ARE
WE GOING?**

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David Lloyd George

Where Are We Going?

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PREFACE

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The chapters collected in this book represent a running comment on the European situation during the past ten months. Although in the haze that covers the Continent it is difficult always to see clearly what is happening, and still more difficult to forecast what is likely to occur, I have not deemed it necessary to revise any of the estimates I made from time to time in these periodic reviews on the position. In the period covered by them peace has gone back perceptibly and unmistakably. Of the years immediately after the end of the Great War it may be said that up to the present year each showed a distinct improvement over its predecessor. The temper of the warring nations showed a gradual healing and improvement, and East and West there was a return to reason and calm in their attitude towards each other. In the Cannes discussions of January 1922 the atmosphere of hostility which poisoned the Spa discussions in 1920 had largely disappeared, and the applause which greeted Herr Rathenau's fine speech at Genoa in April 1922 was cordial and general. The electric messages from Paris failed to provoke a thunderstorm, and one of the speakers, at the last meeting of the Assembly, drawing an illustration from the weather outside, said the Conference had broken up under blue skies and a serene firmament.

That was in May 1922. Those words, when used, met with cheering approval: if used to-day they would be greeted with scoffing laughter. The present year has been one of growing gloom and menace. The international

temper is distinctly worse all round. A peace has been patched up with the Turkish Empire. No one believes it can endure long. The only question is, How long? There may be other patched-up treaties between struggling nations before the year is out. There is only one prediction concerning them which can at this stage be safely made—they will leave European peace in a more precarious plight than ever. A peace wrung by triumphant force out of helplessness is never a good peace. That is why I view with apprehension the character of the settlement which may soon be wrung out of German despair in the Ruhr and imposed on Greek impotence in the Adriatic. The Fiume settlement may turn out to be more satisfactory in spite of threatening omens. The Jugo-Slavs are a formidable military proposition to be tackled by any Power. The War proved them to be about the best fighting material in Europe. They are also fairly well equipped with modern weapons, and if unhappily the need arose their deficiencies in this respect would soon be supplied from the workshops of Czecho-Slovakia and elsewhere. I am, therefore, still hopeful that Fiume may be remitted for settlement to diplomatists and not to gunmen. International right in these turbulent days seems to depend, not on justice, but on a reckoning of chances. The Slavs are ready to defend their rights and can do so. There is, therefore, some talk of conferences and even arbitration in their case. Germany and Greece cannot put up a fight. Unconditional surrender is, therefore, their lot. All the same, this is not only a wrong but a miscalculation. Unjust concessions, extracted by violence, are not settlements; they are only postponements. Unfortunately, the decisions

at the next great hearing of the cause are just as likely to be provisional—and so the quarrel will go on to the final catastrophe unless humanity one day sees the light and has the courage to follow it. But that day must not be too distant, otherwise it will come too late to save civilisation. The last conflict between great nations has exposed the devastating possibilities of modern science. Henceforth progress in the destructiveness of the apparatus of war has been, and will continue to be, so rapid that a conflict tomorrow would spread ten times the desolation caused by the Great War of 1914-18. There is a concentration of much scientific and mechanical skill on strengthening the machinery of devastation. Incredible progress—if progress be the word—has been made within the last three or four years in perfecting and increasing the shattering power of this kind of devilry. What will it be like five, ten, twenty years hence!

Whilst nations are piling up, perfecting and intensifying their explosives, they are also saturating the ground with the inflammable passions which one day will precipitate the explosion. Injustice, insult, insolence, distilled into the spirit of revenge, is everywhere soaking into the earth.

I have never doubted that France could impose terms on Germany. It was clear that she could starve Germany into submission to any conditions dictated to her. It is astonishing that the Germans should have held out so long. What I have steadily predicted in these articles is that those terms will not produce as much reparation as a more conciliatory course would have brought—that to operate them will be a source of constant friction, and that the

methods employed to impose and execute them will rouse a spirit of patriotic wrath which will in the end bring disaster to the victor of to-day.

When the invasion of the Ruhr was decided upon, the shortage in the promised coal deliveries upon which default was declared was barely 10 per cent. A little better organisation of the wagon service on the French side would have made up that deficiency in a very short time. During the months of the occupation the French and Belgians have not succeeded in collecting one-sixth the tonnage delivered during the corresponding months last year. It will take weeks after passive resistance has collapsed to restore railways and collieries to working order. The new *régime* will have to liquidate arrears of at least 15,000,000 tons before it begins its regular monthly deliveries. What about cash payments? It is not too much to say that Germany is much less able to meet her obligations in this respect than she was before the invasion. Her credit has been blown out of sight into infinite space. It will take a long time to pull it back from its wanderings and set its feet once more firmly on European earth. There are only four ways in which the huge sum due from Germany can be liquidated:—

(1) By handing over to the Allies the gold reserves of Germany and of Germans either at home or on deposit abroad. The former is negligible; the amount of the latter is disputable. Much of it is essential to enable Germany to purchase abroad the raw material and food necessary to her existence. The worse German credit becomes the larger must this deposit be. As for the foreign securities and deposits which are not strictly

necessary for trading, they cannot all be made available, for nothing will induce some of the depositors to part with the whole of these securities. The sum, therefore, derivable from this source would amount to but a small percentage of the total figure payable for reparations.

(2) Deliveries of coal, timber, potash, dyes and other raw material. With the exception of timber, these deliveries have been, on the whole, satisfactory—since the Spa Agreement. It did not require the pressure of armed invasion to improve these deliveries, including the timber demands of the Allies.

(3) A percentage levied on German exports. These are paid for in gold or its equivalent, and the levy would therefore be remitted in gold. A levy of 20 per cent. on German exports would have produced between £40,000,000 and £50,000,000 a year on the basis of last year's exports. When German trade returned to normal it would yield £100,000,000. This sum, added to the value of the material delivered, would cover interest and sinking fund on the £2,500,000,000 which is now the accepted maximum of German capacity.

(4) The restoration of German credit with a view to the immediate raising of a loan on reparation account. This would help the Allies over their urgent financial difficulties.

These four methods of payment are the only known and knowable means of obtaining reparations. They would have been more immediately fruitful if so much time, money and resource had not been wasted over this ill-judged invasion.

The apologists of French action in the Ruhr contend that France was driven to these extremes by the refusal of Britain to co-operate with her in bringing legitimate pressure to bear on Germany to carry out the Treaty. Those who put forward this contention argue in ignorance of the proposals submitted by the British Government to the Allied Conference in August 1922. These would have exploited all the methods above set forth to the limit of their productiveness. These proposals were substantially accepted by all the Allies except France. Repeated efforts have been made this year in Parliament to induce the Government to publish this scheme. Both the present and the late Prime Minister gave favourable if not definite answers to the request for publication. But so far the August proceedings have not made their public appearance. Why this reluctance to give the whole facts to the public? The discussions at the November and January Conferences have been published in full. These meetings were only adjournments from the August Conference. The story of the fateful Conference is, therefore, incomplete if August is suppressed. Ought not the world to know the proposals which France rejected in August 1922? In the absence of official publication I will take the responsibility now of giving a Summary.

It was proposed:—

(1) That Germany should be called upon to take such measures as the Reparations Commission should stipulate, in order to balance her Budget and restore her financial stability.

(2) That the Reichsbank should be made independent of Government control.

(3) That 26 per cent. of the total value of German exports should be collected in gold or foreign currencies and paid into a separate account in the Reichsbank in the name of the Sub-Committee of the Reparations Commission known as the Committee of Guarantees.

(4) That the produce of all German import and export duties other than the levy should be paid monthly to a special account at the Reichsbank, which should be under the scrutiny of the Committee of Guarantees. The German Government should have the disposal of the sums standing to the credit of this account so long as the Reparations Commission was satisfied that it fulfilled the obligations imposed upon it. If at any time the Commission was not satisfied that this was the case the Committee of Guarantees should have the right to take over the sums standing to the credit of this account and to secure the payment to it of the produce of these duties thereafter.

(5) There were stern provisions for supervision of German finance by the Committee of Guarantees and for preventing the export of German capital.

(6) There were provisions for supervision over State mines and forests in the event of their being a failure in delivery of coal or timber as the case might be.

A Moratorium up to December 1922 was to be given conditionally on the acceptance of the above terms by the German Government, and the Reparations Commission were then to proceed to fix the further annual payments.

Had these drastic proposals been adopted and enforced by the Allies, what would have been the result? Deliveries of coal and timber would have been ensured up to the full quota arranged. By means of the levy on exports, £50,000,000 would have been already collected in gold and paid into Allied account. The mark would have been stabilised, and could have been made the basis of a considerable loan. As German trade gradually recovered the export levy would bring in larger amounts. This year would certainly have produced a yield of between £60,000,000 and £70,000,000. This is what would have been effected for Reparations if the plan put forward by the British Government had been accepted and put into execution in August. By the settlement of this most troublous question, the great cost and the still greater irritation of the Ruhr episode would have been avoided, trade would have continued its convalescence, and the peace of Europe would have been established.

What would have happened if Germany had refused these terms? We should certainly have heard what objections or counter-proposals Germany had to offer. But we were resolved to have a settlement that would put an end to the fiscal chaos inside Germany, and having thus put her in a position to pay we were equally resolved that she should pay up to the limit of her capacity. We, therefore, undertook, if Germany rejected the terms finally agreed upon, to join France and the other Allies in any coercive measures deemed advisable to compel acceptance. M. Poincaré refused to agree. His refusal alone rendered that Conference fruitless. Over a year has elapsed since then. He

has pursued a different policy. So far it has brought him nothing. I am bold enough to predict that in future it will bring France considerably less than the August 1922 plan would have yielded.

If he is out for reparations his policy will inevitably fail in comparison with that he so rashly threw over. But if he is out for trouble it has been a great success, and in future it will be an even greater triumph for his statesmanship. A permanent garrison in the Ruhr has possibilities of mischief which it does not require any special vision to foresee.

Enduring peace can only rest on a foundation of justice. It is just that Germany should exert herself to the limit of her strength to repair the damage wrought by her armies. She was the aggressor; she was the invader. Her aggression inflicted serious hurt on her neighbours. By the established precepts of every civilised law in the world she ought to pay up. A peace which did not recognise that obligation would be unjust and provoke a righteous resentment in the breasts of the wronged. That sentiment would have been inimical to the good understanding that is one of the essentials of peace. Moreover, it is not conducive to good behaviour amongst nations that they should be allowed to ravage and destroy without paying the penalty of their misdeeds. That is why I do not agree with those who would wipe out the claim for reparations entirely. On the other hand, civilised jurisprudence has also advanced to the stage where it forbids the creditor to attach his debtor's freedom and independence as security for the payment of the debt. The law that permitted a debtor to be sold into bondage for an unliquidated liability has now been voted barbarous by the

more humane usage and wont of the day. That is why I protest against using armed force to occupy and control a country whilst the scourge of starvation is being used to whip its workmen into toiling for payment of a foreign debt. As Mr. Gladstone once said: "Justice means justice to all." The main difficulty of a just settlement of reparations comes from the growing disposition to take sides blindly in this dispute. One party sees nothing but the outrage of 1914-18, the costly vindication of right, and the just claim of the victims to compensation for their losses. The other party sees nothing but the harsh fury with which the victors in the cause press their verdict to execution. Peace can only be restored by a full recognition of the equities as well as the humanities—of the humanities as well as the equities. I have sought in these pages to deal fairly with both.

D. LLOYD GEORGE.

September 13th, 1923.

I THE GREAT PERIL

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If a man on a bright July morning in 1914 had sailed abroad and had the misfortune to be wrecked on a desert island, returning to civilisation a week ago, the change which Europe presented to him would be sufficient to induce him to believe that his long solitude had unhinged his mind. To him it would have appeared as the stuff of which dreams are made. He would have remembered a German empire with an august head, ruling with autocratic sway a

population striding with giant steps into prosperity and wealth, possessing a matchless army, whose tread terrified Europe; with a fleet that provoked articles and novels and agitations about the invasion of England; with vast possessions across the seas. In its place he would see Germany, instead of being a confident, powerful, arrogant empire, a timid, nervous, and apologetic republic presided over by a respectable and intelligent workman, her minister issuing notes to propitiate Belgium, and having them sent back like the stupid exercises of a backward schoolboy to be rewritten in accordance with the pleasure of the taskmaster; the great army reduced to a force one-half the size of that of Serbia; the menacing fleet at the bottom of the sea; the watch on the Rhine kept by French, British, and Belgian soldiers. He would see the Krupp works in French occupation; not a German colony left.

Russia he would have recollected as a powerful autocracy rooted in a superstitious belief by the peasantry in the divinity of its head. He would find it now a revolutionary area ruled by the exiles of yesterday, shunned by the rest of the world because of the violence of its communistic doctrines; tsardom, with its gilded retinue of splendour, flung into a hideous doom, and the sceptre of Peter the Great enforcing the doctrines of Karl Marx. He would see the Austrian empire as much a thing of the past as the empire of Nebuchadnezzar, a poor province lifted out of beggary by the charity of her foes: new states, which had been dead and buried for centuries, risen from the dead, casting off their shrouds, marching in full panoply; Trieste an Italian port; the Dolomites an Italian bastion. The Turk alone quite

unchanged, a few more amputating operations performed upon him, but still preserving sufficient vitality to massacre Christians irrespective of denomination or race, and to become a sore trial and perplexity to the rest of the world.

If our returned voyager travelled through Europe he would find even more fundamental changes in the world of finance, trade and commerce. He would find impoverishment, dislocation; the elaborate and finely-spun web of commerce rent to pieces, and its torn threads floating in the wind. With a few sovereigns in his pocket, he would expect in return 25 francs, 20 marks, and about 26 lire. Instead of that, with a paper sovereign he would find that he could buy 70 francs, nearly 100 lire, 250,000 German marks, 300,000 Austrian kronen, and millions of Russian roubles. The money-changers who once prospered on decimal fractions now earning a precarious livelihood in the flights of the multiplication table. That would give him a better indication perhaps of the reality of the change than even the fall of empires. On his journeys he would travel through prosperous provinces ruttled and overturned as by a gigantic earthquake; he would pass vast cemeteries where 10,000,000 young men fallen in the Great War were having their last sleep; he would see on all hands signs of mutilation of men who had been engaged in the great struggle. Taxation everywhere quintupled with nothing but debt to show for it; industry with its back bent under a burden of taxation which when he left existed only in the nightmares of the dyspeptic rich. He would then be able to realise something of the tremendous upheaval that had taken place in the world.

But what would surprise him more than all these amazing and bewildering transformations would be the one thing in which there was no change. He would naturally expect that after such terrifying experiences, the world would have learnt its lesson, turned its back finally on war, its crimes and its follies, and set its face resolutely toward peace. It is the one thing he discovers has not changed—the world has not learned one single syllable. Suspicions amongst nations exist just as ever, only more intense; hatreds between races and peoples, only fiercer; combinations forming everywhere for the next war; great armies drilling; conventions and compacts for joint action when the tocsin sounds; general staffs meeting to arrange whether they should march, where they should march, how they should march, and where they should strike; little nations only just hatched, just out of the shell, staggering under the burden of great armaments, and marching along towards unknown battlefields; new machinery of destruction and slaughter being devised and manufactured with feverish anxiety; every day science being brought under contribution to discover new methods to destroy human life—in fact, a deep laid and powerfully concerted plot against civilisation, openly organised in the light of the sun. And that after his experience of four or five years ago! Man the builder, and man the breaker, working side by side in the same workshop, and apparently on the best of terms with each other, playing their part in the eternal round of creation and dissolution, with characteristic human energy. What a complex creature is man! It is little wonder that God gave him up repeatedly in despair. He is unteachable.

I wonder whether it is realised that if war were to break out again, the calamity would be a hundredfold greater than that of the last experience. Next time, cities will be laid waste. Possible, and I am sorry to say, probable enemy nations are more closely intertwined, and the engines of havoc are becoming more and more terrible. I have called attention repeatedly to the developments which took place during the late War, in the variety, the range, and the power of destructive weapons. Compare the aëroplane at the beginning of the war, and its small bomb which could easily be manhandled, with the same machine at the end. By the end of the war machines had been built, and but for the armistice would have been used, the devastating power of which was terrific. Since then the power of the machine, the weight of the explosive, and the incendiary material it drops, have grown, and are still growing. Science is perfecting old methods of destruction, and searching out new methods. One day, in its exploration, it may hit on something that may make the fabric of civilisation rock.

Can anything be done to avert this approaching catastrophe? That is the problem of all problems for those who love their fellowmen. I warn you that it is madness to trust to the hope that mankind, after such an experience, will not be so rash as to court another disaster of the same kind. The memory of the terrors, the losses, the sufferings of the war, will not restrain men from precipitating the world into something which is infinitely worse, and those who think so, and, therefore, urge that it is not necessary to engage in a new crusade for peace, have not studied the perverse, the stubborn, and the reckless nature of man.

There is the danger that the last war may even make some nations believe in war.

I have talked to many young soldiers who were fortunate enough to have passed unscathed through some of the worst experiences of the war, to many who suffered mutilation in some of these experiences; they have given me one common impression that the memory of fear is evanescent, and that they cannot now re-create in their own minds the sensations of terror through which they passed. If that is true of those who went through the furnace, what of the multitudes who simply looked on?—the multitudes of those who were too young to take part, and can only recall the excitement produced by the conflict and the glory of victory? The recollection of the headaches of an orgy never lasts as long as that of its pleasures. It is useless to recall memories of the terror and torture of the war, and expect them to crusade for peace. Memory is a treacherous crusader. It starts with a right purpose fresh and hot on its path, but its zeal gets fainter as the days roll past, and it ends by handing over its banner to the foe.

You can only redeem mankind by appealing to its nobler instincts. Fear is base, and you cannot lift mankind by using it as a lever. The churches alone can effectively rouse the higher impulses of our nature. That is where their task comes in.

There is another reason why we cannot regard the danger as having passed away. You have all the elements which made for the Great War of 1914 more potent than ever to-day. The atmosphere of Europe is charged with them.

What made the last war? Armed international dislikes, rivalries, and suspicions. The dislikes were based on age-long racial feuds stimulated by memories of recent wrongs. Celt and Teuton disliking each other; Slav and Teuton suspicious of each other; the hatred of the Slav for the Teuton intensified by the arrogance with which Germany humiliated Russia at the moment of her weakness immediately after the Japanese War, when she was peculiarly sensitive to insult. You will recollect the peremptoriness and the insolence of her gesture over the Bosnian annexation, and insolences are always more painful than wrongs and rankle longer. They corrode the flesh, and burn into the soul of a nation, keeping its anger aflame. I wish nations always remembered that. There was the hatred of the Celt for the Teuton deepened by the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, and by the incidents inseparable from the invasion of a foreign soil. There was Germany suspecting that every railway constructed by Russia was aimed at her heart. There was France convinced that Germany was only waiting her opportunity to pick a quarrel which would enable her to deprive France of her much-coveted colonies. There was England watching with vigilant insight and increasing anger the growth of Germany's great fleet, which she was convinced was aimed at her shores. There were great armies in every continental country ready to march at a moment's notice, fully equipped, each commander firmly persuaded that his own legions were irresistible. You had there all the conditions that made for war. Had it come of set purpose? I have read most of the literature concerning the events that led up to that war, and it is full of warning as

to how wars happen. They do not come because the majority of those who are concerned are bent upon bloodshed, not even the majority who have the decisive voice if they exercised it in time. Had a plebiscite been taken in every country in Europe a week before war was declared as to whether they wished to engage in a European conflict, the proposal would have been turned down by a majority so overwhelming as to show that the proposition was one that no nation had the slightest idea of entertaining. That is not the reason why it came. But you have always in control of the affairs of nations some men who hesitate; many who are apathetic, many who are merely inefficient and stupid; and then most men, even in a government, have their minds concentrated on their own immediate tasks.

I will give you an illustration of how war is begun, once you have the predisposition to quarrel, without anybody wanting it and with the vast majority of the people who are to be engaged in it opposed to it. Austria issued an ultimatum to Serbia. There is nothing a big bully likes better than to hector a little man who is near the point of his toe. Serbia was so near the boot that Austria was constantly tempted to give it a kick, and it did. It issued an ultimatum, which was a very insolent one. The Serbian reply was a practical acceptance of the Austrian demands. This is the note the kaiser wrote on it: "A brilliant performance this. But with it disappears"—listen to this written by the Kaiser of Germany just a few days before war was declared—"but with it disappears every reason for war, and the Austrian minister ought to have remained quietly in Belgrade. After

that I would never have given orders for mobilisation." In three days there was war.

Let me give another illustration. Admiral Tirpitz said he saw Von Jagow two days after the Austrian reply. Von Jagow, the German foreign minister, was so little interested in the Austro-Serbian conflict that he confessed to the German ambassador to Austria on July 27th, two days after the reply had been received, that he had not yet found time to read the Serbian reply to Austria. Here is the document on which ten million young men who had no responsibility for it have been slain, homes have been desolated, and a debt of taxation, confusion and sorrow incurred which will not be wiped out as long as this generation lasts.

It is inconceivable, if one had not some knowledge of the carelessness and the procrastination which are bred in official circles by long practice. That was only three days before war was declared. This high official in the Wilhelmstrasse, who subsequently agreed to the fateful decision to declare war against Russia, had not even read the critical document which ought to have averted the struggle. But there are always the vigilant few, the very few resolute men whose whole mind and energy and skill is engaged ceaselessly in driving forward the chariots of war. Whilst others are asleep, they are craftily dodging the traffic, and stealing along unawares, slowly getting their chariots into position for the next push forward. Whilst others are asleep, they lash the fiery steeds along their destructive course. In the press, on the platform, in the council chambers, in the chancelleries, in society of all kinds, high and low, they are always pressing along. When

the precipice is reached, they dash through the feeble resistance of the panic-stricken mob of counsellors and officials, and nations are plunged into the abyss before they know it.

This is the way most wars come.

Read the history of the war of 1870. It came about in the same confused, clumsy, purposeless way. In all these cases there is always in the background the sinister figure of that force for mischief which used to be known by our Puritan fathers as the devil. Have these hatreds and suspicions abated? Are there no rivalries to-day? Are there no men whose one joy is in war? Was the devil numbered amongst the slain in the last war? I have never seen his name in any casualty list. Look around. His agents are more numerous, more active, more pressing and efficient than ever. Europe to-day is a cauldron of suspicions and hatreds. It is well to speak frankly. Celt and Teuton are now interlocked in a conflict which is none the less desperate because one of the parties is disarmed. There is a suppressed savagery which is but ill concealed, and there are new hatreds which, if they have not been brought into existence during the war, have at any rate come to the surface. Mankind has learnt no lesson from the four or five years of war, although it has been scourged with scorpions. There was nothing that contributed more to the last catastrophe than the annexation by Germany of Alsace-Lorraine. As long as that act of folly remained uncorrected there was no real peace possible in Europe. The nations concerned were just abiding their opportunity, and the opportunity came. Now you have two Alsace-Lorraines at least. There is the annexation of

Vilna by force; there is the annexation of Galicia by force, by violence, by the use of arms against the will of the population. Elsewhere you have the German and the Pole quarrelling over Silesia; the Russian and the Pole over doubtful boundaries; the Czech and the Magyar; the Serbian and the Bulgarian; the Russian and the Rumanian; the Rumanian and the Magyar. There is the age-long feud between Greek and Turk. All have an air of biding opportunity, all are armed ready for slaughter. Europe is a seething cauldron of international hates, with powerful men in command of the fuel stores feeding the flames and stoking the fires. It is no use blaming the treaty of Versailles. This state of things has nothing to do with treaties. Here it is the spirit that killeth and not the letter. Sometimes wrongs are imaginary. Where the wrongs are imaginary time will heal the sense of hurt, but sometimes they are real, and time will fester the wound, but everywhere and always the hatreds are real enough. Can nothing be done? If it can, let it be done in time. Let it be done at once. Yet, once more I remind you that if the gun is loaded—and it is loaded in every land—when the quarrel begins it is apt to go off, not because the trigger is deliberately pulled, but because some clumsy fellow in his excitement stumbles against it.

In a continent which is nominally Christian, the churches surely are not impotent. When the West was all Catholic, and it had the good fortune to have a high-minded and capable occupant of the throne of St. Peter, many a struggle was averted by his intervention. Can the churches not once more display their power? They can only do so by moving together, not merely every denomination in Britain, but