CHAPTER II

"SCRAPS OF PAPER"

Alas, the country! how shall tongue or pen
Bewail her now *un*country gentlemen?
The last to bid the cry of warfare cease,
The first to make a malady of peace.
For what were all these country patriots born?
To hunt, and vote, and raise the price of corn?
But corn, like every mortal thing, must fall,
Kings, conquerors, and markets most of all.
And must ye fall with every ear of grain?
Why would you trouble Buonaparte's reign?
He was your great Triptolemus; his vices
Destroy'd but realms, and still maintain'd your prices;
He amplified to every lord's content
The grand agrarian alchymy hight rent.
Why did you chain him on yon isle so lone?
The man was worth much more upon his throne.
True, blood and treasure boundlessly were spilt,
But what of that? the Gaul may bear the guilt.

— Byron, *The Age of Bronze.*

How many of the journalists writing articles on the present trouble know the history of the "scrap of paper" that was the *casus belli?* The *Encyclopædia Britannica* is not so popular now as the works of Professor Treitschke, "who had brought historical teaching into contact with real life, and had created a public opinion more powerful than the laws" (to quote Lord Acton), but, if the bible of

sciolists is not the fashion, then a glimpse at Evelyn Ashley's *Life of Lord Palmerston* will yield some information as to motives of the Powers in drawing up the Treaties of 1831 and 1839.

Ashley describes the squabbles of the Dutch and the Belgians, and defends Palmerston for tearing one of the main provisions from the Treaty of Vienna, which united Holland and Belgium. When Napoleon fell, we desired to bring these countries together, to fortify parts of them, and relieve ourselves from the anxiety of having to watch a coast which had been hostile and extremely dangerous during the years of Napoleon's might. There was no question of the rights of Belgians in those days; our interest in the affair was one of convenience — how to keep Belgium from falling into the hands of the French. We were, however, between the devil and the deep sea. Ashley says: "To side with Holland would have been contrary to all the traditions which Palmerston had inherited from Canning. To acquiesce in French aggrandizement would have been little short of a national disgrace." Opinion in Britain was divided; there was no whole-hearted outburst of national indignation at the action of Holland. Palmerston's methods were the subject of some fierce attacks. The Foreign Minister had no easy road to travel at any time during the negotiations. Talleyrand was as keen to look after the interests of France as Palmerston was to safeguard the coasts of Britain. The tangle and the wrangle of the settlement was of the order of low comedy, and any one under the impression that the separation of Belgium from Holland was accomplished by the five Powers with one mind and solemn behaviour, should

spend an hour reading the utterly discreditable proceedings. They all snarled and quarrelled like a pack of fishwives. Neither Dutch nor Belgians were pleased when the settlement was made; indeed the King of Holland very soon defied the Allies, and showed his contempt for the "scrap of paper," which the Powers were in no haste to sign. After the Treaty of 1831 was consummated by the signature of Russia, the last power to sign, on May 4th, 1832, it was not long before the neutral states, Holland and Belgium, had another row, this time about Luxembourg and Limbourg. Finally, the matter was adjusted, and a new "scrap of paper" was signed April 19th, 1839, at London. Treaty-making was not the solemn affair the journalists of to-day imagine; and the makers of treaties were not always actuated by the purest motives. Their actions and methods were often enough comparable only to those of a certain class of horse-dealer, whose bargains satisfy neither the seller nor the buyer.

Anyway, the balance of power was secured, and there seemed no reason why any European should ever think of going to war again. For decades the term "balance of power" meant nothing at all to millions of men who sweated their lives away — when they did not give themselves as food for cannon — to help pay the bill for maintaining the balance. It has always been a shifting question; for after sacrificing thousands of lives and spending millions of pounds in attempts to preserve the balance, the result of battles has seldom left the balance of power where it was. Never was such a wobbly thing invented to inflict so much misery on mankind. And diplomatists, as a rule, have had a poor opinion

of it. They have many times discovered, after a war, that little or nothing had been gained by all the fighting. Lord Granville, in 1887, wrote to the Duke of Argyll that his own belief was that the Crimean War was a great misfortune, and that either Palmerston or Aberdeen alone would have prevented it. Yet, no war was ever so popular. It is interesting to read Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice on that blunder. He said:

"In order to find a sufficient explanation of the great decision for which Lord Granville had his share of responsibility we must look further. In the arrogant attitude of Russia since 1815 towards Europe, to which she seemed hardly to belong, in the ever increasing insolence of that attitude since the accession of the Emperor Nicholas, in the existence of a threatening military autocracy rendered doubly odious by half-mystical claims, and in the translation of those claims into action against liberty not merely in Poland or Hungary but all over Europe, is to be found the explanation of the Crimean War. These things had produced an atmosphere of alarm and hatred out of which the lightning was certain sooner or later to leap. No quarrel about the Holy Places, no dispute about the Christian subjects of the Porte, could possibly have dragged an unwilling Prime Minister to associate the history of his Government with a war against a country to which he was, to say the least, not personally hostile. It was the belief which animated the people that western civilization was threatened in its essential conceptions of individual and political liberty which forced him on, and sent the armies and fleets of Great Britain, France, and Sardinia, with no adequate cause of immediate quarrel to the shores of the Black Sea and the Baltic. It is no exaggeration to say that if the Crimean War had never been fought the two subsequent decades of the century would not have seen the formation of a United Italy and a United Germany and all the consequences."

Here is a lesson worth a moment's consideration. It points a moral; two, indeed. The Crimean War was popular; but years after Lord Granville believed it to have been a great misfortune. Russia threatened western civilization; Russia was a military autocracy with half-mystical claims; she was also a danger to individual and political liberty. If the war had not been fought there would have been no United Germany, with all its power; *that* military autocracy with more than half-mystical claims might never have been strong enough to fight the French in 1870. So, we smash one Power which threatens individual and political liberty so that one far worse may some day arm with the intention of smashing us. But Holy Places must be preserved, and there is no better way than using gunpowder and bayonets; just to show a Christian nation's religious feelings are not to be outraged with impunity. The Crimean War cost Great Britain some 25,000 lives, and fifty millions in money; and the balance of power and the position of neutrals received many rude shocks during the progress of that disastrous campaign. The treaty made in Paris in 1856 was only fifteen years old when it was cancelled. Anyway, Russia was properly thrashed, and, for a few years, the citizens of the western democracies slept soundly, their dreams never haunted by the nightmare of a Slav autocracy threatening their individual and political liberties.

Not all diplomatists have been as frank as Lord Granville. In his letters he gives us a glimpse behind the scenes:

"The siege of Sevastopol has hitherto been a failure.

We have generals whom we do not trust, and whom we do not know how to replace. We have an Ambassador at Constantinople, an able man, a cat whom no one cares to bell, whom some think a principal cause of the war, others the cause of some of the calamities which have attended the conduct of the war; and whom we know to have thwarted or neglected many of the objects of his Government. The French generals seem worse than ours; the troops before Sevastopol inferior to ours, if not to the Russians."

That was written to the Duke of Argyll during the progress of the war. It would be interesting to know what the Government at the time told the country about the business. Another passage from the same letter contains a sentiment worth noting:

"In the meanwhile the deaths of brave men and distinguished officers, falling in affairs which have absolutely no results, press upon us the duty of considering whether it is absolutely necessary to continue the war."

Lord Granville might have gone further and said, "No matter what the result, nothing of any practical value to mankind will be gained." He might also have said, "In a few years the Russian and the Turk will be at each other's throats, and even Britain, to say nothing of France, will stand aside and let them tear each other to pieces."

The Treaty of Paris gave the god of battles little rest. The period from Victoria's accession to the date of the Repeal of the Corn Laws was replete with wars; and scores of peoples, scattered nearly all over the earth, engaged the attention of the martial deity. A complete list of the wars and revolutions of that period would occupy too much space; but to mention some of the localities,— to indicate how

widespread the area was over which the god had to watch the strife,— may serve a useful purpose. There was a revolution in Canada; Chartist disturbances at home; war in Afghanistan; tumults in Vienna, Berlin, and Rome: there were wars in India, Burma, Egypt, Turkey, and China; to say nothing of the risings in Ireland and South Wales. France, of course, had a revolution. 1848 was a very busy year for the god of battles. Nietzsche was not to blame for any of those wars. Indeed, the fundamental idea of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* did not come to him until 1881. So that work was not accountable even for the Franco-German War of 1870. And no British editor will assert that Treitschke was a popular author before he went to Leipzig. What then could have been the cause of all the disturbances? It must have been either Goethe or Jean Paul, or, mayhap, Tieck. There were men in Britain who might have said it was our fault for spreading bibles about the globe, and letting the unsophisticated read the 144th Psalm. Anyway, treaties and diplomatists were not successful in so much as keeping the peace of Burma, let alone the peace of Europe.

It must not be inferred, however, that every man in Britain during the first two decades of Victoria's reign was war-mad. There were some men who spoke strongly against armaments. For instance, Sir Robert Peel, in the House of Commons, in 1841, said:

"Is not the time come when the powerful countries of Europe should reduce their armaments which they have so sedulously raised? Is not the time come when they should

be prepared to declare that there is no use in such overgrown establishments? The true interest of Europe is to come to some common accord, so as to enable every country to reduce those military armaments, which belong to a state of war rather than of peace. I do wish that the councils of every country (or the public voice and mind, if the council did not) would willingly propagate such a doctrine."

A brave statement that, in the days when Palmerston and Thiers influenced the military establishments of Britain and France; before the Entente Cordiale was taken as a step towards the goal of European peace. Our western ally of to-day was then in a position to fill the mind of the Duke of Wellington with awe. He wrote, "excepting immediately under the fire of Dover Castle, there is not a spot on the coast, from the North Foreland to Selsey Bill, on which infantry might not be thrown on shore at any time of tide with any wind and in any weather." Seven years after the Duke's awful warning, Britain found France fighting side by side with her in the Crimea. Diplomacy brings together strange bedfellows.

After Russia was soundly thrashed by the Allies, peace did not even bring a reduction of military expenditure. In 1857 we sent military expeditions to China and Persia, at a time when British methods of teaching Hindoo princes how to govern were causing grave unrest in India. Then Disraeli was moved to say, "When a time of peace consists of preparations for war, of fitting out expeditions, of sending fleets to different quarters of the globe, then I am obliged to consider whether the war taxation is not required for circumstances and objects far different from those which a time of peace justi-

fies and requires." Many of the leading men then in the House of Commons believed that the best way to keep the peace was to curtail expenditure on armaments. Whatever may be said of the futility of that notion, it cannot now be claimed, by those who support the contrary view (namely, that the best way to keep the peace is to prepare for war), that large armies and powerful navies are factors which make for international harmony. There were "Little Navy" men in those days. Gladstone, for instance, resolutely opposed Palmerston's scheme to expend £11,000,000 on the defence of arsenals and dockyards. That was in the summer of 1860, when Herbert was at the War Office, and scared so many patriots by saying he was convinced that a great calamity was impending in the shape of war with France. Three years earlier the French Emperor had offered to facilitate the passage of troops through France to reinforce our regiments in India. The Cabinet, the House, and the country, were, nevertheless, in a state of panic, and Palmerston carried the day. Millions were spent fortifying our coasts against a French invasion, and the taxpayers, no doubt, felt secure behind the fortifications that saved them from Herbert's impending calamity. But to their sorrow, the taxpayers learned, in a very few years, that their millions had been thrown away. At that time of panic Gladstone said:

> "We have no adequate idea of the predisposing power which an immense series of measures of preparations for war on our part has in actually begetting war. They familiarize ideas which lose their horrors, they light an inward flame of excitement of which, when it is habitually fed, we lose the consciousness."

The change from wooden to iron vessels two years after the panic revealed the madness of the wasters who had squandered the millions in 1860. From panic to negotiation within one year was quick shifting for any nation; still, Disraeli, in 1861, suggested a compact should be made with the French Government to limit naval expenditure. He said:

"What is the use of diplomacy, what is the use of Governments, what is the use of cordial understandings, if such things can take place?"

Cobden at that time used all his intelligence and strength to make the Government and the people see the danger of the nations piling up enormous armaments. His view of the question is worth remembering:

"A remedy for the evil can only be found in a more frank understanding between the two Governments. If they will discard the old and utterly futile theory of secrecy — a theory on which an individual manufacturer or merchant no longer founds his hopes of successful competition with a foreign rival — they may be enabled, by the timely exchange of explanations and assurances, to prevent what ought to be restricted to mere experimental trials from growing into formidable preparations for war. But the greatest evil connected with these rival armaments is that they destroy the strongest motives for peace. When two great neighbouring nations find themselves subjected to a war expenditure, without the compensation of its usual excitements and honours, the danger to be apprehended is that if an accident should occur to inflame their hostile passions — and we know how certain these accidents are at intervals to arise — their latent sense of suffering and injury may reconcile them to a rupture, as the only eventual escape from an otherwise perpetual war taxation in a time of peace."

Well might Disraeli ask what is the use of diplomacy. But " discard the old and utterly futile theory of secrecy," and what becomes of nine-tenths of the work of the Foreign Office? Besides, parasites take good care of their departments, and as they have benefited from the system, they consider it their duty to pass it on with all its privileges unimpaired to future parasites, as if it were a vested interest. Palmerston would have none of Cobden's Utopian proposals,— not he,— and straightway he set out to keep the country in a state of panic.

Diplomatists kept the god of battles busy through the years extending from the Crimean War along to 1864, the year before Palmerston passed away to that realm where the " jingo does not panic and bingo has no sale." Just about that period Prussia set to work to put her house in order. British statesmen failed to detect new movements which would mean great things in European history, but Palmerston was not the man to estimate the value of those plans and tendencies. And to-day, now that so many writers are looking to find the beginnings of this Germany we are warring against, few understand the influences that were at work about the year 1860, to which the extraordinary changes which took place might very well be attributed. The rise of Bismarck cannot be accredited to the teachings of Sybel and Treitschke, as some people imagine. Nor were the German people stimulated by their works. It may, however, be safely suggested that the vast majority of the Germans of that time read more books and pamphlets of Ferdinand Lassalle than those of any other four or five authors. Treitschke was read then no more than Bergson is read in Eng-

land now. The Germany we are trying to understand in this year 1915, is the product of two men of extraordinary powers who met in the plastic time, and impressed their strong personalities on a people of great capacity. Ferdinand Lassalle and Bismarck were the men, and the Germany that is puzzling many newspaper historians owes no more to the latter than it does to the former. George Brandes touches this idea in his work on Lassalle:

"One event during the nineteenth century has provoked the greatest surprise and astonishment in Europe. Unsuccessful attempts at its explanation have been, and are still, offered by the different European nationalities. This event is the process by which the Germany of Hegel was transformed to the Germany of Bismarck. Some theorists speak as if the old German stock had suddenly died out, and a new race had sprung up without roots; others, as if the old stock had been destroyed or ennobled by an infusion of Wendish-Slavonic blood. To some, modern Germany is enigmatic as the Iron Mask. The face of the philosopher and poet was the real countenance, and this has now been hidden by Prussian domination, as the mask concealed the identity of the unhappy prisoner. Others, again, regard the old and pleasant countenance of romance as the mask, hypocritically hiding the real features, which have now become visible. These views are alike injudicious, and are based in either case upon ignorance of the course of development which modern Germany has pursued. If this development is studied in literature, it will be seen how, step by step, the ideas, the methods of action, and the views of life pursued and entertained by the newer generation have developed organically from those of the past age. The gulf which divides the Germany of Hegel from the Germany of Bismarck will gradually be filled before our eyes. The faces upon either side of this gulf will appear as related by similarity of feature; while certain interesting and strongly marked

countenances which stand out boldly against the background of history will of themselves typify the process of transition and amalgamation which has fused the intellectual individualities of two generations. Of these special features hardly any is more interesting or more clearly cut than the figure of Ferdinand Lassalle. He was born on April 11th, 1825, and died of a wound received in a duel on August 21st, 1864. He was a distinguished pupil of Hegel, and was spoken of in his time as Bismarck's tutor, and not unreasonably; for even though he cannot be shown to have influenced Bismarck directly, yet, if we examine the points which decided both the foreign and domestic policy of the great statesman, we shall find that this policy precisely realized the programme propounded by the philosophical agitator."

How any responsible student of the history of Germany can pretend to describe her growth during the middle third of the last century, without taking account of the influence and genius of Lassalle, is incomprehensible. The same confusion exists to-day in the minds of the critics of German policy that existed over fifty years ago in the Fatherland, as to Lassalle's interpretation of Might and Right. Then the common notion was that Lassalle put might in the place of right. When he said in his lecture in Berlin in 1862, "Constitutional questions are, therefore, in the first instance, not questions of right, but questions of might," he stated the case of every so-called civilized nation, not Germany only, but Britain, France, and Belgium. He said, "The actual constitution of a country has its existence only in the actual conditions of force which exist in the country." No Britisher should now deny that ugly truth. But Lassalle was not stating what should be; he was presenting the case as it then stood in Germany and in other nations. True, the press at the time inter-

preted the lecture as a declaration that might was right. Lassalle in a pamphlet replied to the obvious misunderstanding, and said, "If I had created the world I should very probably have made an exception at this point in favour of the wishes of the *Volkszeitung* and of Count Schwerin, and have arranged that right should precede might. Such an arrangement would be quite in harmony with my own ethical standpoint and desires. Unfortunately, however, I have not been entrusted with the creation of the world, and must therefore decline any responsibility, any praise or blame, for the nature of existing arrangements."

Certainly, the first law of every "civilized" nation is force.

But we return to the immediate subject, however fascinating the digression may be to one whose only amusement in these terrible days is the nonsense babbled and scribbled by statesmen and journalists on German philosophers. The next exhibition of might preceding right was another utterly discreditable affair for British diplomacy. It took place in Eastern Europe, concerning Poland. What half a century can do for European nations, in changing and shifting thrones and boundaries, cannot be better illustrated than by presenting a simple record of events since 1862. Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice in his *Life of Lord Granville,* adorns the tale from which the public of to-day might draw many morals. Writing about the beginning of this century, Fitzmaurice said:

"Poland was then, as it still is, the hinge on which Prussian foreign policy turns. Ever since the first partition to avoid a conflict with Russia has been the policy of the Prus-

sian Foreign Office and the inherited tradition of her Royal Family. The Minister whom William I had just called to his councils, already contemplating that he might shortly have to open a new and perilous chapter of German and European history, which might bring him into collision with Austria and France, was determined under no circumstances whatever to risk a struggle with Russia. He, on the contrary, intended to obtain a solid guarantee of her future good-will, with an eye to coming events. To stand rigidly aloof from European intervention in the affairs of Poland was the obvious method to gain his end, especially as this policy would have the additional advantage of separating Russia from France should France join in the proposed intervention."

Britain and France sympathized with the Polish insurrectionists, but diplomatic intervention without the support of Austria or Prussia seemed to Lord Granville an act of madness. The Queen was alarmed and feared a rupture with Russia. The King of the Belgians wrote to the Queen a letter which is of great significance at present when Britain is spending millions and sacrificing thousands of lives in " upholding " the integrity and independence of Belgium. It seems incredible that the King of a small, weak power could write in such terms of an ancient kingdom that had suffered more terribly from the aggression of great powers than any country in the world. And it should be remembered that Belgium then owed its political existence to the Treaty of 1839. The King said:

" About Poland the English Cabinet must be prudent. . . . It would be impossible for the Emperor Alexander to give up these provinces, which, one must say, are prosperous, and have been now Russian for a long period. Their ex-

istence will be improved, as truly much has been already done in that way. But the Russians as a nation will never and can never submit to give them up. To carry on a war for that purpose, would for England be a fool's play. If a Poland, as the Garibaldians wish it could be restored, it would be in close alliance with France; and Prussia, particularly between the French on the Rhine and a French province on the Vistula, could not exist. It would be completely nullified. Austria would also get such a dangerous set of people near Hungary, that it would find itself in the same position. England has a vital interest, for its own security, that those two Powers should continue to maintain their existence. . . ."

Poor Poland! Not much sympathy then for your notions of independence. But what a strange thing is diplomacy! After all, continuity of foreign policy is merely a party shibboleth, and ambassadorial labours are vain. Prussia and Austria were the bulwarks of British and Belgian foreign policy of that day, and France was the menace to the peace of Europe. The British Cabinet did not then go out of its way to do much for a small nationality, and it was content to give merely platonic advice to Russia. Fitzmaurice said, "With the result that at the end of the diplomatic campaign Russia had become bound by ties of gratitude to Prussia for having refused to take part in it, while the previous good understanding between France and Russia was shattered. The remnants of good feeling between France and England were also still further reduced. . . . The net result was that both Great Britain and France were felt to have lost heavily in public estimation."

Then followed all the squalid business of Schles-

wig-Holstein and Denmark. Any one deeply imbued with the alleged gallantry of diplomatic Britain guarding the interests of small states and preserving "scraps of paper," might read with profit the history of our share in those transactions. In looking back it is amazing to see just where we stood in relation to France. Writing of the Frankfurt Congress, Lord Granville said to Lord Palmerston:

> "No doubt anything tending to German Unity would be disagreeable to France, but would not give France any just pretence for attacking Belgium or Prussia, and if unity was in any military sense accomplished, it would make French aggression towards the Rhine more difficult."

There, in that Danish brawl, again the question of the integrity of a kingdom (which had been guaranteed by the Powers in a treaty in 1852) nearly set Europe in a blaze. The Germans resented the action of the Powers and now sought an opportunity of adding to their area the two Elbe Duchies. The squabble gave all the diplomatists a grand chance of pushing ulterior affairs affecting their states. It was, indeed, an orgy in which the mildest game was "beggar my neighbour," and the most modest one "strip Jack naked." The Jingoes in England were elated at the prospect of a war with Germany. Palmerston had high hopes; the situation was one he gloried in. There is nothing like a "scrap of paper" for bringing nations at each other's throats, whether it be to keep the scrap whole or to tear it to shreds. The temperature of Britain was raised to fever heat at the force thrown by two great Powers on little Denmark. Ashley says: "It was suggested that France and Great Britain should offer their media-

tion on the basis of the integrity of the Danish monarchy and the engagements of 1851–2; and that, if such mediation were refused by Austria and Prussia, England should despatch a squadron to Copenhagen, and France an army corps to the Rhenish frontier of Prussia." Palmerston talked big and did little. He said: "If any violent attempt was made to overthrow the rights and to interfere with the independence of Denmark, those who made the attempt would find in the result that it would not be Denmark alone with which they would have to contend." Ignorance of German feeling and ambition was just as dense then as it is now, and the ignorance was the cause of many silly misunderstandings. Apart from the national question of Denmark, some people said the Schleswig-Holstein affair arose because commercial bills in the Duchies were drawn upon Hamburg and not upon Copenhagen! A letter from the Queen to Lord Granville is instructive as to the way monarchs in those days regarded "scraps of paper":

> "The Emperor (French) and M. Drouyn de l'Huys say 'We wish to maintain the treaty, but if the alternative is maintaining it or a conflagration in Europe, we prefer to modify or cancel it, rather than a conflagration.' . . . We have done too much, been too active, and done ourselves no good. We are, alas! detested in Germany."

The Queen fought hard for peace against the leaders of the Opposition and some of her chief Ministers. It was, however, Lord Granville whose wisdom and tact ultimately saved the country from a disastrous war. In another letter the Queen said:

> "The only chance of preserving peace for Europe is by

not assisting Denmark, who has brought this entirely upon herself, and who, the Queen believes, would now even resist fulfilling her promises! Denmark is after all of less vital importance than the peace of Europe, and it would be madness to set the whole Continent on fire for the imaginary advantages of maintaining the integrity of Denmark. Lord Palmerston and the Emperor Nicholas are the cause of all the present trouble by framing that wretched Treaty of 1852."

What strange ideas Victoria had of treaties and people's rights. What would have happened had she been on the throne last year? She might have asked what on earth the people of this generation have to do with a treaty signed in 1839, and why the British nation should be committed to a European conflagration because their grandfather's Foreign Secretaries agreed to a diplomatic deal of which the people knew little and cared less. She might have said, " that Lord Palmerston was the cause of all the present trouble by framing the wretched Treaties of 1831–9 which abrogated the Treaty of Vienna." " Scraps of paper " were not hallowed in those days, and even Queens preferred peace to the strict observance of treaties made by men who scarcely ever consulted the people. Victoria's stand against Palmerston and Russell in 1864 was a notable performance for a constitutional monarch. The following on sacred duties and convictions is refreshing:

"The Queen thanks Lord Granville for his reassuring letter. She can only repeat that she is so thoroughly convinced of the awful danger and recklessness of our stirring up France and Russia to go to war, that she would be prepared to make a stand upon it, should it even cause the resignation of Lord Russell. . . . There are duties and con-

victions so sacred and so strong that they outweigh all other considerations. . . . We must not commit a second time the grievous fault of signing away other people's rights and of handing over people themselves to a Sovereign to whom they owe no allegiance."

Palmerston's unauthorized threat that he would regard it "as an affront and insult to England," and that he "would not stand such a thing" if an Austrian squadron were to pass along the English coasts, was provocative if it were nothing else. The Cabinet did not endorse the language of the fire-eating statesman, and though the fate of Britain for a long time trembled on the brink of war, the saner folk rallied to the side of the Queen. She wrote at midnight, June 23rd, 1864, to Lord Granville:

"What the Queen is so anxious for is that the true, real, and great interests of the country should be considered, and the enormous danger of allying ourselves with France, who would drag us into a war with Italy and on the Rhine and set all Europe in a blaze; which is so far more important than the very foolish excitement which the Queen is sure will cool down the moment war seems likely to result from it. . . . The Treaty of 1852 must be given up."

And given up it was; utterly destroyed by the wolves that feasted on the menu at Prague. Denmark was stripped stark of Lauenburg, Holstein and the southern part of Schleswig, and the Danish portion of that Duchy. Prussia won an all-round victory, leaving no unscrupulous military, diplomatic, or imperial method out of the deal. Our prestige and honour came out of all the miserable business somewhat tousled; but the people were spared the cost of an unnecessary war. Whether they regretted the

loss of prestige and honour suffered by her diplomatists will never be known; for there is no way of estimating the value of diplomatic honour in a game that is carried on without the participation of the people. In the House of Commons, Disraeli moved the following motion:

"To express to Her Majesty our great regret that while the course pursued by the Government had failed to maintain their avowed policy of upholding the independence and integrity of Denmark, it has lowered the just influence of this country in the councils of Europe and thereby diminished the securities for peace."

It was in 1864 that John Bright had something to say about the balance of power, which had been so many times upset since Napoleon was sent to St. Helena. Speaking in Birmingham, Bright said:

"The theory of the balance of power is pretty nearly dead and buried. You cannot comprehend at a thought what is meant by the balance of power. If the record could be brought before you — but it is not possible for the eye of humanity to scan the scroll upon which are recorded the sufferings which the balance of power has entailed upon this country. It rises up before me when I think of it as a ghastly phantom which during one hundred and seventy years, whilst it has been worshipped in this country, has loaded the nation with debt and taxes, has sacrificed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Englishmen, has desolated the homes of millions of families, and has left us, as the great result of the profligate expenditure it has caused, a doubled peerage at one end of the social scale, and far more than a doubled pauperism at the other. I am very glad to be here to-night, amongst other things, to be able to say that we may rejoice that this foul idol — fouler than any heathen tribe ever worshipped — has at last been thrown

down, and that there is one superstition less which has its hold on the minds of English statesmen and of the English people."

Bright perhaps regretted that so much labour was wasted on the schemes of diplomatists while the rights of individuals were neglected at home. Education, the franchise, and religious equality had not much chance in Parliament while foreign affairs occupied the attention of statesmen. Any trouble abroad about some succession, or treaty, or duchy, was of far greater importance than the economic, political, or religious rights of the people. Whether it is moral for one generation to impose the obligations of war on the next has not yet been decided by politicians — much less diplomatists — nor has it yet occurred to any statesman to draw a sharp line of differentiation between those affairs that directly affect the true interests of the people, and the terrible traffickings which are done in the name of the people without their consent. In 1864 the agricultural labourer in Britain was a chattel-slave, and millions of the workers in the towns were politically little better off. Instead of a vote, a rifle; instead of an acre of "their native land," a place in a foreign trench; instead of the full value of his product, a ticket for soup; these were the net returns for worshipping the "foul idol." And there were not less cant and hypocrisy talked in the days of Palmerston than are talked now in the days of Sir Edward Grey.

The foul idol was not, however, so easily got rid of as Bright imagined. If the balance of power was thrown down in 1864, it did not take diplomatists long to set up something just as foul in its place. What do terms matter? The cost is just the same,

whether it be balance of power, Triple Alliance, Entente Cordiale, known agreements, secret agreements, or "conversations between military and naval experts." The result is the same; the nation loaded with debt and taxation; hundreds of thousands of lives are sacrificed; homes desolated; and there stalks a pauperism which brings honour and glory to the flag that floats over the free. The prestige of a landless people is something the war-poets might immortalize in song, and the patriotism of a double peerage be exalted in new epics that might rival Byron's "Age of Bronze." The gospel of learning to die for one's country was satirical enough in 1864; — certainly millions had little chance of living decently in it,—

> "The 'good old times'— all times when old are good —
> Are gone; the present might be if they would;
> Great things have been, and are, and greater still
> Want little of mere mortals than their will:
> A wider space, a greener field is given
> To those who play their 'tricks before high heaven.'
> I know not if the angels weep, but men
> Have wept enough — for what? — to weep again!"

Did Bright think the power to make war passed with the burial of the balance of power? Sanguine man, he little knew what a decade of diplomacy would bring forth. Abyssinia, the Austro-Prussian War, and the Franco-German Wars had to come. The inevitable in each case had to happen! Soon after Bright's speech, the god of battles was as busy as ever. Meanwhile legislators quarrelled like Kilkenny cats as to whether the time was ripe for the people to have free education, more votes, and fewer

religious animosities. Britain entered upon the three last decades of the nineteenth century with high hopes of that enlightenment which would bring wisdom to electors, and enable them to judge which party was politically best to carry on the stupendous work of foreign affairs. But with all these hopes of raising an educated electorate, not yet have the people learned that "*Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good.*"