

CHAPTER X

THE POWER TO WAR

Gone By and utter *Nothing* are all one;
Why, then, does this creating still go on?
Gone by? What means it? — What a sorry trade!
Making, and making nothing of what's made.
And then this nothing evermore we see
Making pretence a something still to be.
So on it goes, the same dull circle spinning —
'Twere better with the Eternal Void beginning!
— Goethe.

Now to turn aside for a little while from the Foreign Office, and the endeavours of members to elicit reliable information concerning diplomacy and the traffickings of ambassadors, we will fix our attention on the War Office. On July 4th, 1912, the year of the Berlin Conversations, Mr. Amery moved to reduce the army estimates by £100. From the debate which followed we must quote at some length, so that it may be clearly understood how the policy of secrecy works in relation to members "in the know," and those who can only rely on the statements of Ministers; and consequently, with regard to these affairs, do not know until it is too late to protest. Mr. Amery said:

"My object is to draw the attention of the Committee to the gravity of the military situation as a whole, and to the urgent necessity of bringing our military preparations

into some sort of correspondence with our general national policy. The point I wish to insist upon to the Committee is that we should face the logical consequences of the policy to which this country already stands committed with the general approval of the great majority on both sides of the House, and that we should shape our military preparations by the same standard by which our naval preparations are invariably determined — the standard, I mean, of the force we may have to encounter in war. It is common ground to us all in this House that we must at any cost and at all hazards maintain the supremacy of the British navy against the growing menace of German rivalry at sea. It is also common ground, at any rate among the great majority of us, that the domination of Europe by a great military power which is also our greatest rival at sea would in the long run make the retention of our naval supremacy impossible, and consequently the maintenance of France as an independent great Power in Europe is, in the present situation, not only an honourable obligation, but a vital interest to the safety of this country. It is also common ground that in certain eventualities, eventualities which seemed by no means remote less than a year ago, we should be prepared to send a military force to France to assist her. What ought also to be common ground, and no less common ground than those matters I have already mentioned, is that the force thus sent should be adequate to achieve its purpose. If we send a force at all, and it is agreed that we should send it — [Hon. Members: "No!"] It is by the great majority on both sides of this House, and if we send a force at all we should send it to make sure of victory and not to share a defeat."

The members who cried "No" perhaps remembered the replies to Mr. Jowett's questions in March, 1911, when he asked if we were under obligations to send troops to the assistance of France. They were relying no doubt on the negative reply returned by the Minister, and not then thinking of a

secret system which precluded the possibility of a truthful answer to such questions. Be that as it may, Mr. Amery had no compunction in speaking his mind forcibly on the matter. Further, he became prophetic:

“Why should we not have from the Secretary of State for War an equally clear, explicit statement of the relative forces which would take the field in France and Belgium at the outbreak of that same conflict, and an equally clear recognition from him of the duty of the War Office to provide a force which would make it unlikely that a German attack upon France would succeed, and therefore in the highest degree improbable that the attack would ever be attempted? . . . The question I should like the right honourable gentleman to answer is whether or not we have a military force strong enough to render France secure in the event of an attack. Has any right hon. gentleman, addressing this House, ever put that question before us? Do we even pretend to face it? Let me remind the Committee that since the crisis of last year Germany has added very considerably to her navy. Immediately, and with the assent of every one, we responded by a substantial increase of our navy. May I also remind the Committee that since that same crisis Germany has added 80,000 men to her army for the express purpose of strengthening the force that is to march through Belgium to crush the French left. It is upon our Expeditionary Force that the brunt of that march would fall. Has any responsible Minister come down to this House and asked even a single battalion to be added to the strength of our army?”

This was all deeply interesting matter, for Mr. Amery was not remotely connected with the *London Times*, and as members knew from many bouts at question-time, earlier in the year, the military correspondent of the *Times* was the editor of the *Army*

Review, with a room at the War Office. At any rate, Mr. Amery knew so much that some members, who knew no more than Ministers cared to tell them, scoffed defiantly at Mr. Amery's knowledge. One more quotation from his extraordinary speech:

"Our opponents will have the choice of two objectives. They can attempt either to interfere with the despatch of the Expeditionary Force or to cover an invasion, a counter-stroke intended either to bring us to our knees or, at any rate, to prevent a considerable part of the Expeditionary Force from going, and so to clear the field for the German advance through Flanders."

Now if the information Mr. Amery gave to the House was authentic, what becomes of all the indignation of Ministers at Germany's violation of the neutrality and independence of Belgium? General Staffs were hard at work, and it might safely be imputed that they did not leave the Belgian military authorities ignorant of their plans. After Mr. Amery the House heard Sir Reginald Pole-Carew:

"I want to say a word about the Expeditionary Force. We have been told by the hon. member who has just spoken that the preparations of the Government are grossly inadequate, and I entirely agree with him. I do not think that those preparations exist. I did not ask to see that blue envelope because I did not wish to have my tongue tied by anything that it might have contained. Also I want to know why it should be 'secret'; who is it who is to be kept in ignorance? Is it that the people of this country are to be kept in the dark and hoodwinked and not to be allowed to know what the preparations are which are necessary for their safety? Is it that reason? Is it that our enemies are not to know? I venture to think that the most probable enemy we have at the present moment can give the right

hon. gentleman points in information. Is it those we hope to be our allies? I think that is the most dangerous question of the whole lot. If you choose to hoodwink your friends—and I am sorry to say the present Government have done so with great success—if you think you are deceiving your enemies, neither is so bad as to attempt to deceive those whom you hope will be your allies abroad and to whom you are making promises which I do not think you can carry out. I say that is a most dangerous proceeding.”

The statements of Mr. Amery and Lt.-Gen. Sir Reginald Pole-Carew were not refuted by the Minister for War; indeed the War Office authorities in the House did not refer at all to the matter of our being pledged to send the Expeditionary Force to the assistance of France in a war with Germany. Small wonder Germany wished to know if she might have a free hand. The Opposition at no time since the autumn of 1910 seemed to be in doubt about our engagement with the French. Only the rank and file of the Liberal party remained ignorant of the full measure of our diplomatic liabilities, and though many back-bench Liberals severely criticised the foreign policy of the Government, the Ministry left them to endure the sneers and jeers of the Opposition “in the know.” It would be hard to find in the pages of any book by a German militarist a specimen of grosser contempt for pacifists than that displayed by the Government in those days. Well, there is a kind of loyalty that deserves to be treated with contempt! There was, however, no doubt in French official and press circles as to our engagement. Mr. Buxton, in the Foreign Office debate of July, 1912, quoted from the *Nouvelle Revue*, one of the most prominent Paris reviews, a statement

lurid enough to satisfy the supporters of M. Delcassé:

"We intend to have war. After forty years of a heavily armed peace, we can at last utter this opinion, without the serious readers of a French review shaking in their shoes. . . . France is ready to strike and to conquer as she was not ready forty years ago, and she will not be in four or five years to come, owing to the annual divergent numbers of the birth rate in each country. . . . We, the attacking party, will have arranged with England that their fleet . . . will have followed . . . the remains of the whole German navy into German waters."

Later in July another attack was made on the supplementary naval estimates by Mr. Middlemore, one of the most persistent of the Opposition in questioning the Admiralty as to our preparedness. He said:

"Then we had some criticisms from the Prime Minister. He said the Vote was not to threaten the Triple Alliance. He left Italy entirely out. The Triple Alliance is an association of three Powers to fight under certain circumstances, and I cannot conceive how this can be judiciously, fairly, patriotically, and wisely left out, and if one leaves it out, as far as one's self is concerned, we must remember that we have an *entente*, and that if the three Powers attack France we shall have to defend France, or else the *entente* is a sham which ought never to have been made. It is perfidious Albion again."

Though the question of secret treaties was brought up several times during the long autumn and winter session no information was given by Ministers as to whether we were involved with France or not. The correspondence between the Foreign Secretary and the French ambassador passed in November, but

nothing about it was communicated to the House. At the beginning of the next session, Lord Hugh Cecil raised the question of secret engagements in the debate on the Address. The passages are of such extraordinary interest they are worth quoting in full from the official report:

“Lord Hugh Cecil: ‘The right hon. gentleman made reference to foreign affairs, and there is one aspect of them, of not so controversial a character as others, on which I should like to say a few words. The right hon. gentleman and his colleagues are generally believed—I speak with the utmost diffidence in regard to allegations which may not be well founded—to have entered into an engagement, or, to speak more accurately, to have given assurances, which in the contingency of a great European war would involve heavy military obligations on this country. We do not suspect the Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary of pursuing anything but a pacific foreign policy, and we are far from saying that their policy is in any way an aggressive one; but certainly we believe, if the stories current are true, the policy, if it is not to be regarded as an aggressive one, is adventurous.’

“The Prime Minister: ‘Will the noble lord define a little more definitely what he means?’

“Lord Hugh Cecil: ‘I am only anxious not to use words which will convey anything but perfectly fair criticism in a matter of this sort, and any ambiguity in what I have said is due to the fact that I do not wish to go beyond the necessities of the case.’

“The Prime Minister: ‘I do not complain.’

“Lord Hugh Cecil: ‘There is a very general belief that this country is under an obligation, not a treaty obligation, but an obligation arising out of an assurance given by the Ministry in the course of diplomatic negotiations, to send a very large armed force out of this country to operate in Europe. That is the general belief. It would be very

presumptuous of any one who has not access to all the facts in possession of the Government—'

"The Prime Minister: 'I ought to say that it is not true.'

"Lord Hugh Cecil: 'I am very glad to have elicited that explanation. It is certainly widely believed that the Government have engaged in a military policy of an adventurous kind, and I certainly think, if that is right, that it would involve very important considerations when you come to consider what are the military resources of this country. We shall have a debate on that point. It is impossible, as the late Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was fond of emphasizing, to judge of the military policy of this or any other country, unless you enter into the understandings or obligations involved by its foreign policy. It is quite impossible for this House fully to criticise the military policy of the Government unless they know, at any rate, what it is the Government expect the army to do. It certainly would follow that if you were prepared, as no recent Government has attempted to be prepared, to take an important military part in the early stages of a great European war upon the Continent, the military preparations of other Governments, and of this Government in the earlier years of its tenure of office, were not sufficient. Let me add that I am not indicating or hinting that we ought to have compulsory military service. There is no one who dislikes compulsory military service in any shape or form more than I do, and I should never be convinced in its favour by any argument excepting that which showed it to be urgently necessary for the protection of the country. It is a matter for very grave consideration, if we are getting into a position in which obligations become binding upon us, whether the voluntary system will ultimately bear the strain. I do not believe any Government will adopt a compulsory military service unless the case is strong enough to be brought about by general consent. But what we have to be afraid of is that we will get into such a position that the military

obligations of this country may become so heavy that the voluntary system may break down. I hope that the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for War may be able to co-ordinate the foreign policy and the military policy in order to show how the military policy and the foreign policy fit together—how far the military resources of the country are really sufficient to carry out the obligations thrown upon those resources by the foreign policy of the Government. I think that is a matter of very great importance.’”

Now, why did the Prime Minister say, “I ought to say that it is not true”? Was he shielding the Foreign Secretary, or was he a victim of the despicable system of secrecy that necessitates so much lying in connection with foreign affairs? Was the Prime Minister not informed as to the exchange of letters between Sir Edward Grey and M. Cambon, only a little more than three months before the debate? That is probable, but it must be remembered that the Foreign Secretary in his speech on August 3rd, told the House that the letters were exchanged after the Cabinet had seriously considered the matter. It is so hard to believe the Prime Minister wilfully misled the House.

When the House reached the army estimates, ten days after the debate referred to above, Major-General Sir Ivor Herbert dealt with the agitation of the conscriptionists in the country, and said:

“When I was interrupted just now I was about to quote the words of Lord Roberts with regard to the use of this great force. He said: ‘It is to carry out our bounden duty to the Continental alliance for the maintenance of the balance of power in Europe.’ It never was contemplated by the present Government and I am certain it never will

be contemplated by them, that we should maintain half a million of men here for use in an expedition on the Continent for the maintenance of the balance of power in Europe. . . . We have no such bounden duty to a Continental Alliance. The Prime Minister the other day interjected an absolute denial when he was questioned by the noble lord, the Member for Oxford, as to whether we had any such bounden duty. He said that there was nothing of the sort. It would be the duty of any Government before entering into such responsibility as that to make it known in this House."

On March 24th, the question of treaty obligations was raised again; two members asked the Prime Minister if the country was under any, and, if so, what, obligation to France to send an armed force in certain contingencies to operate in Europe. To the questions the Prime Minister replied:

"As has been repeatedly stated, this country is not under any obligation not public and known to Parliament which compels it to take part in any war."

There was nothing in the questions about the country being compelled to take part in any war, but the reply was accepted as a complete answer to the questions. He also said, "If war arises between European Powers there are no unpublished agreements which will restrict or hamper the freedom of the Government or of Parliament to decide whether or not Great Britain should participate in a war."

Though the denials of the Prime Minister lulled the fears of his supporters, those "in the know" were not so easily gulled.

Towards the end of March, 1913, Mr. Churchill introduced the navy estimates, and adverted to the

suggestion of a "naval holiday." The estimates amounted to £46,309,300, but the gross expenditure before the year ended rose to £49,625,636. Within a week or two of the First Lord's announcement, the Jingo press of this country poured out a stream of wicked lies to the effect that Germany's answer to Mr. Churchill's offer of a "naval holiday" was a greatly swollen programme. The terror-strikers and the blood-spilling brigade worked hard to raise another panic. In the House the every-man-a-sailor party cried for more ships, more money, and more men. The position in the Mediterranean was very freely discussed. Mr. Lee said:

"There is the vital question of the Mediterranean, and here I would again remind the Committee of the very precise, dramatic and important statement made by the Secretary of the Colonies last autumn, which was endorsed by the Prime Minister, in which he said: 'We shall maintain our position there, both on land and sea, to as full an extent as we have ever done in the past, and in doing so we shall depend upon no alliance or understanding, actual or implied, but upon our own forces.' The First Lord in his Navy Memorandum showed that, in 1915, Austria and Italy combined would have ten 'dreadnaughts,' and that our squadron of four battle cruisers and four armoured cruisers would not suffice to fill our requirements, and that this matter must be reconsidered. We shall have, by that time, no ships to spare in home waters for this purpose. It is, therefore, clear that if this policy is carried out we must practically build a new squadron for service in the Mediterranean, and, what is more, we must begin it immediately."

Lord Charles Beresford suggested that Mr. Churchill must "be trusting to France to guard the Mediterranean." It was, however, Sir C. Kinloch-

Cooke who brought out clearly the peculiarity of our understanding with France. He said:

“The First Lord bids us take comfort in the fact — these are his own words — that,

“‘in conjunction with the Navy of France, our Mediterranean Fleet would make a combined force superior to all possible combination.’

“A remarkable statement, look at it how you will, and one I think the Committee will agree somewhat difficult to reconcile with the recent pronouncement of the Prime Minister as to our understanding with France in the matter of armaments. In one case we have the Prime Minister repudiating an obligation on our side of any kind, and in the other we have the First Lord of the Admiralty relying for the safety of our Eastern Empire, our trade and our food supply, upon the assistance which he presumes will be ready at any moment to be given to us by France.”

Remarkable, indeed! but not so strange when the whole course of the tortuous business is traced from the time Sir Edward Grey consented to the conversations in 1906. It would have been remarkable if contradiction and evasion had not followed as a consequence of the Foreign Secretary's secret diplomacy. Prevarication seems to have become the first law of secret diplomacy since the Algeciras Act was signed. Still, truth will out, though not always from the mouths of babes and sucklings. In August, 1913, Lord Haldane, in the House of Lords, placed the Prime Minister in an invidious position, when he said:

“I do not think it would be reasonable or wise for any Government to keep a fleet in the Mediterranean equal to the fleets of Austria and Italy combined, because the burden would be simply enormous, and there is no justification for

it. . . . France has in the Mediterranean a fleet almost as great as the fleet of Austria and Italy combined, and if you take into account that we are on the most friendly relations with France, and that our fleet in the Mediterranean is a substantial one, then, looking at the balance, you have a situation which cannot be described as unsatisfactory."

Thus to the First Lord's name must be added the name of the then Lord Chancellor of England as being at variance with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary as to our obligation to France. But when the Prime Minister in 1911 said that the rumours of war in the summer of that year were "extravagant fictions" and nothing but "pure invention," humble members of the House should not be surprised when Ministers make contradictory statements in connection with diplomacy.

It may be well to take one last look at the "naval holiday" suggestion. In October, 1913, Mr. Churchill went to Manchester, and there he had another fling at his pet scheme for reducing armaments. In the spring, when the estimates were introduced, the Jingoës spread reports of a vast increase in the German estimates. Mr. Churchill recognized that it would not be possible for either Germany or ourselves, even if the two nations were agreed, to stand still for a whole year unless other Powers could be persuaded to do likewise, but he anticipated that if Great Britain and Germany took the lead in approaching other European Powers, their great influence would insure good prospects of success. Nevertheless he said:

"Now we say, while there is plenty of time, in all friendship and sincerity to our great neighbour Germany: 'If you will put off beginning your two ships for twelve months

from the ordinary date when you would have begun them, we will put off beginning our four ships, in absolute good faith, for exactly the same period.' ”

That seemed to the layman a fairly reasonable proposal. But was it feasible? If we glance at the figures of the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance we shall see that Great Britain was in a position to say to Germany, “ After the scandalous way you have been treated by Entente diplomacy, the Government is determined to show that its fine words on good relations and peaceful intentions mean something substantial; therefore it will bring pressure to bear on the partners of the Triple Entente to desist from building ships in the year 1914.” With the French fleet in the Mediterranean, and the northern and western coasts of France undefended, the proposition would not have been so Quixotic as it appears. Anyway, at the time it was worth any sacrifice to convince Germany that our policy was not one of isolating her in Europe. The figures for gross expenditure and for new construction were well above a two Power standard in favour of the Triple Entente :

GROSS EXPENDITURE, 1913

Great Britain ...	£49,625,636	Germany	£23,030,633
France	21,292,422	Austria	7,332,703
Russia	25,392,784	Italy	13,333,762
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Triple Entente ..	£96,310,842	Triple Alliance .	£43,697,098

NEW CONSTRUCTION, 1913

Great Britain ...	£16,883,875	Germany	£11,010,883
France	8,893,064	Austria	3,288,937
Russia	12,082,516	Italy	3,933,000
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Triple Entente ..	£37,859,455	Triple Alliance .	£18,232,820

It is a pity Mr. Churchill was not in a position to tell the people of England that he had arranged with France to leave the Mediterranean to her fleet while England's looked after the Channel and the North Sea. If he could have broken down the barriers of the criminal policy of secrecy, and have been perfectly frank about the naval position, he might have carried the vast majority of the people with him. He might have said that the panicky reports of the spring with regard to the swollen estimates of the German Government were not true, and that it would be worth while removing all suspicion from the minds of German statesmen; but that this could be done only by a bold declaration that we shall not build any ships this year,— or next, if it could not be arranged for this year. Hidebound tradition, however, held him fast in its grip; and his proposal only served to blind those of his fellow-countrymen who prefer to do anything but study these affairs for themselves. As it was, the suggestion made no headway in England and the Germans took it for a sorry joke.

In the spring of 1914, the debates which were raised on the defence of the Empire and the strategic position of the forces in the Mediterranean, revealed the profound dissatisfaction of well-informed members as to the value of the Entente, and the policy of the "Commander of the Forces" as to foreign affairs generally. The navy estimates reached the colossal figure of £52,261,703, and many men began to wonder whether ententes were not after all fearfully expensive luxuries; particularly when the armament burden was so unfairly apportioned. When one partner in an entente, with little risk of a land

war, has to spend twice as much on her navy as either of her two partners, it is time to ask what return will she ever get for the crushing burden thrown upon her workers? But secret understandings and entangling alliances must be paid for, no matter who objects, and no matter how much lying such a policy may entail. When the Foreign Office hands over the fate of a nation to military and naval experts, and the people permit a system which gives the Foreign Secretary the power of a "Commander of the Forces," and lets him conduct his business without Parliamentary control,—then the nation must not complain when it is asked to settle the bill of costs. But it should be remembered that new generations will have to bear their share of the burden. The people of the next generation will look at the history of this terrible war with calm deliberation. They will not be blinded by the passions let loose by our foreign policy during the past eight years, which make it almost impossible for men of to-day, fighting for their national existence, to see the long sequence of error, mendacity, and stupidity which has brought this awful crime to fruition. But reason will return; other views will replace those which are dominant to-day; and history will repeat itself in this case as surely as it has done in the case of every other war. Then, in the process of reconsideration, the verdict will be given against all those forces which have brought the nations of Europe to the slaughter and devastation of an Armageddon. A rider will accompany that verdict, blaming secret diplomacy, the Jingo press, the armament ring, and the polyglot gangs of concessionaires, for embroiling this nation in the strife.

Some more questions about our obligations to engage in military operations on the Continent must be recorded here. The Foreign Secretary replied to both of them. The first one was put on April 28th, 1914:

“Mr. King asked the Secretary for Foreign Affairs whether he is aware that demands have been recently put forward for a further military understanding between the Powers of the Triple Entente with a view to concerted action on the Continent in case of certain eventualities; and whether the policy of this country still remains one of freedom from all obligations to engage in military operations on the Continent?”

“The Secretary (Sir Edward Grey): ‘The answer to the first part of the question is in the negative, and as regards the latter part the position now remains the same as stated by the Prime Minister in answer to a question in this House on the 24th, March, 1913.’”

The Prime Minister had said the country was under no obligation; there were no agreements which would restrict or hamper the freedom of the Government or of Parliament.

Then two questions were put on June 11th, 1914:

“Mr. King asked whether any naval agreement has been recently entered into between Russia and Great Britain; and whether any negotiations, with a view to enable agreement, have recently taken place or are now pending between Russia and Great Britain?”

“Sir William Byles asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether he can make any statement with regard to an alleged new naval agreement between Great Britain and Russia; how far such agreement would affect our relations with Germany; and will he lay papers?”

“Sir Edward Grey: ‘The hon. member for North

Somerset asked a similar question last year with regard to the military forces, and the hon. member for North Salford asked a similar question also on the same day, as he has done again to-day. The Prime Minister then replied that, if war arose between European Powers, there were no unpublished agreements which would restrict or hamper the freedom of the Government or of Parliament to decide whether or not Great Britain should participate in a war. That answer covers both the questions on the paper. It remains as true to-day as it was a year ago. No negotiations have since been concluded with any Power that would make the statement less true. No such negotiations are in progress, and none are likely to be entered upon so far as I can judge. But if any agreement were to be concluded that made it necessary to withdraw or modify the Prime Minister's statement of last year, which I have quoted, it ought, in my opinion, to be, and I suppose that it would be, laid before Parliament.' ”

Less than *two months* before the outbreak of hostilities, this was the way the British House of Commons was treated by Ministers of a Government which began its career in 1906, under the old Liberal flag that bore the motto, “Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform”! Well might the socialists cry at meetings when Liberals have asked for the democratic forces to pull together, “Liberals, forsooth! your Government has never been Liberal since the Liberal Leaguers got control of the Cabinet!” Only those who have borne the brunt of the political fighting in the country know how hard the task has been to keep the old Radicals in the fighting line while this Government has been enmeshed in the entanglements of a Continental system through its mad imperial desires and its secret foreign policy. Twitted by the Conservatives for “a meek sub-

serviency" in the division lobby, and a "grotesque impotency" under an autocratic Ministry; and, on the other hand, charged by the socialists as supporters of gangs of British and foreign capitalists syndicated for the business of exploiting the natives of Africa and Asia (besides acquiescing in the nefarious designs of the armament ring to rob the wealth-producers of the country) members who sacrificed some of their principles in order to get land reform, constitutional reform, and franchise reform, found in the end that such benefits as they had gained were mere dross as considered against the crime of participating in a European war.

So late as June 29th, 1914, the true position of the House in relation to foreign affairs was described by Mr. Swift MacNeill, in the debate on the Foreign Office Vote. He said:

"If we are not to know the reality of things it would be better if we had no debates in this House on foreign policy. Member after member gets up and says what to the best of his information are the true facts of the case, but none of these hon. members are furnished with official information as they would be furnished with on any matter of domestic policy. I think it is an amazing thing to see how the House is crowded on matters of naval defence, and to see how this House of Commons allows itself to be treated as a child in matters which are the springs of policy themselves—in matters which create wars, and for which these naval defences are themselves required. It would be immensely better if there were fewer millions spent on the Navy, and there was an open public policy as to our relations with other Powers. . . . I say that the Houses of Parliament so far as foreign policy is concerned are absolutely impotent. . . . This House of Commons has no power to declare war or to make peace. These preroga-

tives of the Crown are practically invested in the Ministers, and exercised by them. In foreign affairs they are not responsible. The Ministry of England can declare war to-day without consulting the House of Commons. Perhaps it will be said that is all right, and that the House of Commons has the power of stopping supplies. Yes, but no House of Commons with ordinary patriotic feeling would dream of stopping supplies when that means the maintenance and protection of soldiers abroad, whatever may be the facts of the war. Therefore, the Cabinet has power to make peace and to declare war; to make this country enter into the very highest and most momentous international transactions, and has a power which it has not in connection with the narrowest turnpike Bill. Can any one imagine a Committee of Parliament, such as the Cabinet is, should be able to put the country under the most intense national obligation, and to bind the lives and destinies and properties of the subject?"

Outside of Germany the bureaucracy of Berlin has had no more implacable opponents than the Radicals of Britain. For nearly twenty years it has been pointed out in speeches and pamphlets as the great Continental stumbling block in the road to a fuller and deeper understanding among the workers of the great Powers. The whole system of Government at Berlin has been utterly disliked by the progressive people of this country, because it practically lies in the hands of a special set of men dominated by the Kaiser. Under his will the bureaucracy shaped the course of peace and war and social affairs, while little or no political power rested in the hands of the vast majority of the German people. Absolute in all things that concern the destiny of a people, the Kaiser stood for all those economic and political abominations the British people had fought in their

land for hundreds of years to overthrow; grievances they had been to some extent successful in removing. Have they then fought in vain? What is the position in this year of 1915? A Cabinet with absolute power to plunge the nation within a week into a European war, to carry out obligations the House of Commons were told less than eight weeks before hostilities commenced did not exist; but which the Government confessed, when it was too late, were entered into more than eight years ago. The end of our constitutional struggle, then, is to set up an absolute Cabinet in place of an absolute monarch and an all-powerful House of Lords.