

# Great Britain and Germany

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# GREAT BRITAIN AND GERMANY

Now that both Swiss and Germans have expressed in the pages of this journal their opinions on the present struggle, perhaps a British subject may be permitted to add a modest and concluding contribution. I do not pretend to be neutral, and I do not think that any reasonable man would expect me to be. Nor do I wish to lay the blame of the war on the back of any of the belligerent states; it must be clear to every thinking person that the policy of the great powers of late years must have inevitably led to a catastrophe. I wish merely to attempt to shed some light on the relations between Germany and Great Britain. "There is no smoke without fire"; the efforts made for many years by eminent men in both countries to bring about better relations between them point to the fact that these relations left a great deal to be desired. As a matter of fact, Germany has, since 1871, been the political and commercial rival of England. That war was the beginning of Modern Germany; it showed the nation its potentialities, and was the birth of German "thoroughness". It seems as though the nation then began to look for new worlds to conquer; that it said to itself: "If we have conquered France, the greatest nation of the Continent, what shall we not be able to do in future?" It was clear that the only other nation worth beating was the island realm which had arrogated to itself by conquest, purchase and policy all the best colonies in the world. This nation was compelled by the necessities of the case to maintain a large and powerful fleet. Its land army, though efficient, was small. Germany, equally compelled by necessity to keep up a large army, now began to have other ambitions; it was to become a great naval power—and the first step to the present conflict with England was taken. English politicians could not look on this movement without a certain uneasiness; hence the efforts to maintain friendly relations. There was, too, in both countries an undertone of mutual dislike and distrust which was continually cropping up in the press and on the lips of the man in the street. But it was the South African campaign that opened the eyes of the British people to the real sentiments of Germany, or, rather, of the Germans, towards them. Conan Doyle, writing in 1902<sup>1)</sup> voices the opinions of the English people when he says: . . . "for the first time in history we have had a chance of seeing who were our friends in Europe, and nowhere have we met more hatred and more slander than from the German press and the German people. . . . At first this unexpected phenomenon merely surprised the British people, then it pained them, and, finally, after two years of it, has roused a deep and enduring anger in their minds. . . . It is not too much to say that five years ago (i. e., 1897) a complete defeat of Germany in a European war would have certainly caused British intervention. Public sentiment and racial affinity would never have allowed us to see her really go to the wall. And now it is certain that in our lifetime no British guinea and no soldier's life would under any circumstances be spent for such an end. This is one of the strange results of the Boer war, and in the long run it is possible that it may prove not the least important."

These are significant words.

There is no doubt—in spite of the contrary statements of Mr. Zimmermann's critics—that he is right in asserting that Germany was convinced of England's decadence, and that she further mistook the probable attitude of the Colonies to the mother-country. The fact that Germans imitated or adopted one or two English

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<sup>1)</sup> *The war in S. Africa; its cause and conduct.*

customs does not prove anything, for it is characteristic of the German nation to adopt or imitate anything without discrimination. And whoever read the German papers during the Boer war must have frequently come across the thought, expressed in various ways, that the time was not far distant when the Colonies would throw off the "British Yoke". Well, that time has not yet come!

And England? Her attitude to Germany has always been that of her attitude to the other Continental states — a reserved friendliness. The English government has never troubled itself about the opinions of foreign governments as to its policy; it claims the right to look after its own interests in the way that seems best. The idea of commercial jealousy which has been so carefully and cleverly propagated by the German press since the outbreak of the war, is discounted by the actual facts. English free trade has allowed German manufacturers to dump their wares on the English markets and to make a splendid profit thereby. A nation which was actuated by commercial hatred would hardly have given her most powerful rival every opportunity of capturing all her trade!

But the causes of the mutual distrust and dislike lie far deeper than any commercial or political hatred can explain. As a matter of fact, Englishmen and Germans are never likely to be friends because of the difference in their characters and ideals. A nation that possesses the *Magna Carta* and the *Habeas Corpus Act* can never feel any great sympathy for a nation that allows its daily life to be hedged round by police restrictions and military laws. In Great Britain the people, sooner or later, imposes its will on the government; in Germany it is the contrary. It is pathetic, too, to read in German papers and magazines the questions. "Why are we so hated?" "Why have we so few friends". No other nation has ever felt the necessity of posing these queries. No thinking person denies the good qualities of the Germans, but they have no monopoly of such qualities. There are virtuous Frenchmen, intellectual Englishmen, enlightened Russians in the world; there are, no doubt, Servians who are not murderers, and there may be, one supposes, modest Germans. But no one can accuse the Germans as a nation of an excess of modesty — and it is probably in this fact that they will find an answer to the questions mentioned above!

ST. GALLEN

FRANK HENRY GSCHWIND



## TRAUER

Von ROBERT JAKOB LANG

Die Trauer sitzt bei mir zu Gaste;  
Woher sie kam, ich weiß es nicht;  
Ich weiß nur, dass mir alles Licht  
Mit einemale wie verblasste.

Nun möchte ich am liebsten gehen,  
Dass niemand mehr mich weinen sähe,  
Und dass ich einmal ohne Nähe,  
Vor meinem Leide könnte stehen.

