

# The new spirit in England

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# THE NEW SPIRIT IN ENGLAND

A catastrophe such as the world has been going through for the past four years could not fail to produce a marked effect on the mentality of those directly implicated. This has been especially the case in Great Britain, a fact which is explained on the one hand by the marked character of the British, which has always been different from that of the continental peoples, and on the other by the fact that, among the belligerent nations, England has been most deeply struck in her social and political foundations. A peaceful commercial people, with an abhorrence of everything savouring of militarism has found itself suddenly compelled to adopt compulsory military service. A nation whose personal liberty of action had become proverbial is forced into the straight-jacket of police bye laws and compulsory legislation and state control. Only those who have lived in England and have a thorough knowledge of the British character can form an idea as to what such measures mean to the English people.

The entire character of a people is naturally not affected in its deep-rooted instincts by a war such as the present, and the English still retain their racial characteristics. But a new spirit has been awakened by the events which the world is going through.

The contact with the French has done a great deal to free the British from that insularity which has always been, in spite of railways and steamships, a characteristic feature of the British. The *entente cordiale* which, as its name implies, was intended to be nothing more than the friendly *rapprochement* of two nations that had long been more or less at enmity with each other, has freed England not a little from her insularity and her Puritanism. Puritanism, indeed, though it added strength to the Anglo-Saxon character, had nevertheless the defects of its qualities, leading to a certain narrowness of conception especially in regard to matters over which the continental mind was wont to pass more or less lightheartedly. Not that English people were intolerant, but they felt themselves somewhat too secure of the righteousness of their own manner of seeing things. The contact with the French, with their tendency to mockery and their sparkling wit, has done a good deal to brush away certain cobwebs from the British national character.

The contact with the Americans and especially the influence of their President has also acted directly on the English spirit. It is a mistake, but one which is frequently made, to jumble Englishmen and Americans together in the same crucible, just as though one were to maintain that there was no difference between Germans and German-Swiss. In spite of racial and lingual relationship the American is a very different person from the Englishman. He is penetrated with the modern spirit and despises the traditions which Europeans hold so dear. He is ready to plunge into a fight for the sake of an ideal without stopping to consider the consequences to himself. This idealism of his American cousins has had a great influence on the British mind. The English know, as good business people, that the United States, by their entry into the war, have nothing to gain materially and a great deal to lose both in men and money. The contact with the Americans has done much to strengthen the idealism of the British which

stamped Kitchener's army out of the ground as if by magic. The entry of America into the ranks of the belligerents has further tended to awaken the democratic spirit in Great Britain. The old social barriers which were already tottering have been almost entirely broken down and especially the working classes who, in spite of the strength of the organisation of the Trades Unions, had not yet attained to the social and political power which was their due, have now become a power in the land. Before the war, the somewhat hysterical efforts of the Suffragettes usually called forth a pitying or contemptuous smile. But in view of the manifold services rendered by women to the country in the crisis it is going through, the British sense of fairness has felt that it was but right that the women should have some reward. On the new register of voters some eight million new names figure of which about six million are women whose votes will have a perceptible influence on the coming elections. This sweeping reform has been successfully carried through at a time when the country was racked by the difficulties caused by a war such as the world has never seen.

The most marked effect of the war on the English spirit, however, has been the gradual abandonment of individualism in favour of collectivism. The liberty of the subject, so dear to every Briton, has been given up to the service of the state. A striking revelation of this spirit was the placing of the command of the British forces in the hands of a foreigner, Maréchal Foch, a step which involved considerable constitutional difficulties, as the commander of the army must be one responsible for his actions to the British Parliament. This cannot be demanded of Maréchal Foch and it is typical of the new spirit now reigning in England that this step was accepted almost without a murmur by the whole of the British people.

A further example of the new spirit is the calm manner in which the English people tolerate government interference with their industrial and commercial concerns. In former times such interference would have been fiercely resented; nowadays it is accepted as a matter of course.

It remains to be seen whether this new spirit will remain permanent in the English mind. In any case it may be said that the "Old England" of days gone by is no more: no people can go through events such as England has gone through since August 1914 without emerging purified by the change.

ZURICH

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## BERUFSWAHL DER INTELLEKTUELL GEBILDETEN FRAU

Die Erziehung und Schulbildung unserer Mädchen haben in den letzten Jahrzehnten eine wesentlich günstigere Richtung angenommen. Die Erziehung im Elternhaus ist vielseitiger geworden, der Lehrplan in den Schulen ermöglicht ihnen, ungehindert bis zur Universität weiter zu studieren, wo sie sich gemeinsam mit dem jungen Mann auf eine geistige Berufstätigkeit vorbereiten können. Unbeeinflusst durch ihren bessern Lehrgang, kann sich die Tochter, wenn sie sich zur Ehe reif fühlt, dem der Frau in erster Linie