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ABOVE THE BATTLE

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"The fire smouldering in the forest of Europe was beginning to burst into flames. In vain did they try to put it out in one place; it only broke out in another. With gusts of smoke and a shower of sparks it swept from one point to another, burning the dry brushwood. Already in the East there were skirmishes as the prelude to the great war of the nations. All Europe, Europe that only yesterday was sceptical and apathetic, like a dead wood, was swept by the flames. All men were possessed by the desire for battle. War was ever on the point of breaking out. It was stamped out, but it sprang to life again. The world felt that it was at the mercy of an accident that might let loose the dogs of war. The world lay in wait. The feeling of inevitability weighed heavily even upon the most pacifically minded. And ideologues, sheltered beneath the massive shadows of the cyclops, Proudhon, hymned in war man's fairest title of nobility...."

"This, then, was to be the end of the physical and moral resurrection of the races of the West! To such butchery they were to be borne along by the currents of action and passionate faith! Only a Napoleonic genius could have marked out a chosen, deliberate aim for this blind, onward rush. But nowhere in Europe was there any genius for action. It was as though the world had chosen the most mediocre to be its governors. The force of the human mind was in other things—so there was nothing to be done but to trust to the declivity down which they were moving. This both the governing and the governed classes were doing. Europe looked like a vast armed camp."

Jean-Christophe, vol. x (1912).

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[English translation by Gilbert Cannan, vol. iv, p. 504.]

{4}

ABOVE THE BATTLE

BY

ROMAIN ROLLAND

TRANSLATED BY

C. K. OGDEN, M. A.

(Editor of *The Cambridge Magazine*)

CHICAGO

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INTRODUCTION

*"Over the carnage rose prophetic a voice,
Be not dishearten'd, affection shall solve the problem of freedom yet.*

.

*(Were you looking to be held together by lawyers?
Or by an agreement on a paper? or by arms?
Nay, nor the world, nor any living thing, will so cohere.)"*

These lines of Walt Whitman will be recalled by many who read the following pages: for not only does Rolland himself refer to Whitman in his brief Introduction,

but, were it not for a certain *bizarrierie* apart from their context, the words "Over the Carnage" might perhaps have stood on the cover of this volume as a striking variant on *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*.

Yet though the voice comes to us over the carnage, its message is not marred by the passions of the moment. After eighteen months of war we are learning^{8} to look about us more calmly, and to distinguish amid the ruins those of Europe's intellectual leaders who have not been swept off their feet by the fury of the tempest. Almost alone Romain Rolland has stood the test. The two main characteristics which strike us in all that he writes are lucidity and common sense—the qualities most needed by every one in thought upon the war. But there is another feature of Rolland's work which contributes to its universal appeal. He describes our feelings and sensations in the presence of a given situation, not what actually passes before our eyes: he describes the effects and causes of things, but not the things themselves. Through his work for the *Agence internationale des prisonniers de guerre*, to which one of the articles now collected is largely devoted, he is, moreover, in a position to observe every phase of the great battle between ideals and between nations which fills him with such anguish and indignation. And with his matchless insight and sympathy he gives permanent form to our vague feelings in these noble and inspiring essays.

It will not, however, surprise the vast public who have read *Jean-Christophe* to find that while so many have capitulated to the madness of the terrible^{9} year through which we have passed, Rolland has remained firm, and has surpassed himself. He was prepared. As the extract placed at the beginning of this volume shows, he was one of the few who realized only too well the horror he was powerless to prevent. Yet he made every effort to open the eyes of Europe and especially of the young, so many of whom had learned to look up to him as a leader. To these young men, one of the finest essays in the present collection is primarily addressed—*O jeunesse héroïque du monde....*

Eighteen months have passed and they still endure the terrible ordeal, the young men of Germany and France, whom he had striven so hard to bring together; on whose aspirations and failings *Jean-Christophe* is a critical commentary. The movements and tendencies of society were there given a dramatic embodiment, permeated for Rolland by the Life Force—that struggle between Good and Bad, Love and Hatred, which makes life worth living. All is set down with the clear analysis of feeling natural to a musical critic. But in spite of his burning words on the destruction of Rheims, Rolland, as is clear from his other critical and biographical writings, is more interested in men than^{10} in their achievements. And the men of today interest him most passionately. "Young men," he has said, "do not bother about the old people. Make a stepping-stone of our bodies and go forward."

And above all it is the permanent things in life with which he is concerned. As Mr. Lowes Dickinson puts it, "M. Rolland is one of the many who believe, though their voice for the moment may be silenced, that the spiritual forces that are important and ought to prevail are the international ones; that co-operation, not war, is the right

destiny of nations; and that all that is valuable in each people may be maintained in and by friendly intercourse with the others. The war between these two ideals is the greater war that lies behind the present conflict. Hundreds and thousands of generous youths have gone to battle in the belief that they are going to a 'war that will end war,' that they are fighting against militarism in the cause of peace. Whether, indeed, it is for that they will have risked or lost their lives, only the event can show."

The forces against such ideals are powerful, but Rolland is not dismayed. "Come, friends! let us make a stand! Can we not resist this contagion, whatever its nature and virulence be—whether^{11} moral epidemic or cosmic force." And he appeals not only in the name of humanity but in the name of that France which he loves so dearly—"la vraie France" of which Jaurès wrote (in the untranslatable words which Rolland has quoted), "qui n'est pas résumée dans une époque et dans un jour, ni dans le jour d'il y a des siècles, ni dans le jour d'hier, mais la France tout entière, dans la succession de ses jours, de ses nuits, de ses aurores, de ses crépuscules, de ses montées, de ses chutes, et qui, à travers toutes ces ombres mêlées, toutes ces lumières incomplètes et toutes ces vicissitudes, s'en va vers une pleine clarté qu'elle n'a pas encore atteinte, mais dont le pressentiment est dans sa pensée!"

But though his love for France inspires every word that Rolland has written, the significance of the present volume is not less apparent to English readers. Some of the articles and letters now collected have already appeared in English, for the most part in the pages of *The Cambridge Magazine*, from which they have been widely quoted in the press. For help in rendering the translations as adequately as possible I may also take this opportunity of acknowledging my special indebtedness to Mr. Roger Fry,^[1] who^{12} has just issued through the Omega Workshops a striking translation of some of the most recent French poetry inspired by the war; to Mr. James Wood, who has himself done part of the translation, particularly "pro Aris"; and to Mr. E. K. Bennett, of Caius College, whose version of "Above the Battle" has already been quoted by the Archbishop of Canterbury and others. For the most part, the articles here collected have not appeared in English before; and they have been almost inaccessible even in French, as their author explains in his Preface.

C. K. OGDEN.

MAGDALENE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, *January, 1916.*

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It is my pleasant duty to thank the brave friends who have defended me during the past year, in the Parisian press:—at the end of October 1914, Amédée Dunois in *l'Humanité*, and Henri Guilbeaux, in the *Bataille syndicaliste*; in the same paper, *Fernand Deprès*; Georges Pioch in the *Hommes du Jour*; J. M. Rénaitour, in the *Bonnet Rouge*; Rouanet, in *l'Humanité*; Jacques Mesnil, in the *Mercure de France*, and Gaston Thiesson, in the *Guerre Sociale*. To these faithful comrades in the struggle I express my affectionate gratitude.

R. R.

October, 1915.

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PREFACE

A great nation assailed by war has not only its frontiers to protect: it must also protect its good sense. It must protect itself from the hallucinations, injustices, and follies which the plague lets loose. To each his part: to the armies the protection of the soil of their native land; to the thinkers the defense of its thought. If they subordinate that thought to the passions of their people they may well be useful instruments of passion; but they are in danger of betraying the spirit, which is not the least part of a people's patrimony. One day History will pass judgment on each of the nations at war; she will weigh their measure of errors, lies, and heinous follies. Let us try and make ours light before her!

Children are taught the Gospel of Jesus and the Christian ideal. Everything in the education they receive at school is designed to stimulate in them intellectual understanding of the great human family. Classical education makes them see, beyond^{16} the differences of race, the roots and the common trunk of our civilization. Art makes them love the profound sources of the genius of a people. Science makes them believe in the unity of reason. The great social movement which renews the world, reveals the organized effort of the working classes all round them to unite their forces in the hopes and struggles which break the barriers of nations. The brightest geniuses of the earth, like Walt Whitman and Tolstoi, chant universal brotherhood in joy and suffering, or else like our Latin spirits, pierce with their criticism the prejudices of hatred and ignorance which separate individuals and peoples.

Like all the men of my time, I have been brought up on these thoughts; I have tried in my turn to share the bread of life with my younger or less fortunate brothers. When the war came I did not think it my duty to deny these thoughts because the hour had come to put them to the test.

I have been insulted. I knew that I should be and I went forward. But I did not know that I should be insulted without even a hearing.

For several months no one in France could know my writings except through scraps of phrases arbitrarily extracted and mutilated by my enemies. It^{17} is a shameful record. For nearly a year this has gone on. Certain socialist or syndicalist papers may have succeeded here and there in getting some fragments through,^[2] but it was only in the month of June 1915 that for the first time my chief article, the one which was the object of the most violent criticism, "Above the Battle," dating from September 1914, could be published in full (almost in full), thanks to the malevolent zeal of a maladroit pamphleteer, to whom I am indebted for bringing my words before the French public for the first time.

A Frenchman does not judge his adversary unheard. Whoever does so judges and condemns himself: for he shows that he fears the light. I place before the world the texts they have slandered.^[3] I shall not defend them. Let them defend themselves!^{18}

One single word will I add. For a year I have been rich in enemies. Let me say this to them: they can hate me, but they will not teach me to hate. I have no concern with them. My business is to say what I believe to be fair and humane. Whether this pleases or irritates is not my business. I know that words once uttered make their way of themselves. Hopefully I sow them in the bloody soil. The harvest will come.

ROMAIN ROLLAND.

September, 1915.

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I. AN OPEN LETTER TO GERHART HAUPTMANN

Saturday, August 29, 1914.^[4]

I am not, Gerhart Hauptmann, one of those Frenchmen who regard Germany as a nation of barbarians. I know the intellectual and moral greatness of your mighty race. I know all that I owe to the thinkers of old Germany; and even now, at this hour, I recall the example and the words of *our* Goethe—for he belongs to the whole of humanity—repudiating all national hatreds and preserving the calmness of his soul on those heights "*where we feel the happiness and the misfortunes of other peoples as our own.*" I myself have labored all my life to bring together the minds of our two nations; and the atrocities of this impious war in which, to the ruin of European civilization, they are involved, will never lead me to soil my spirit with hatred.^{20}

Whatever pain, then, your Germany may give me, whatever reasons I may have to stigmatize as criminal German policy and the means it employs, I do not attach responsibility for it to the people which is burdened with it and is used as its blind instrument. It is not that I regard, as you do, war as a fatality. A Frenchman does not believe in fatality. Fatality is the excuse of souls without a will. War springs from the weakness and stupidity of nations. One cannot feel resentment against them for it; one can only pity them. I do not reproach you with our miseries; for yours will be no less. If France is ruined, Germany will be ruined too. I did not even raise my voice when I saw your armies violating the neutrality of noble Belgium. This flagrant breach of honor, which incurs the contempt of every upright conscience, is quite in the political tradition of your Prussian kings; it did not surprise me.

But when I see the fury with which you are treating that magnanimous nation whose only crime has been to defend its independence and the cause of justice to the last, as you Germans yourselves did in 1813 ... that is too much! The world is revolted by it. Keep these savageries for us^{21} Frenchmen, your true enemies! But to wreak them against your victims, against this small, unhappy, innocent Belgian people ... how shameful is this!

And not content to fling yourselves on living Belgium, you wage war on the dead, on the glories of past ages. You bombard Malines, you burn Rubens, and Louvain is now no more than a heap of ashes—Louvain with its treasures of art and of science, the sacred town! What are you, then, Hauptmann, and by what name do you want us to call you now, since you repudiate the title of barbarians? Are you the grandsons of Goethe or of Attila? Are you making war on enemies or on the human spirit? Kill men if you like, but respect masterpieces. They are the patrimony of the human race. You, like all the rest of us, are its depositories; in pillaging it, as you do, you show yourselves unworthy of our great heritage, unworthy to take your place in that little European army which is civilization's guard of honor.

It is not to the opinion of the rest of the world that I address myself in challenging you, Hauptmann. In the name of our Europe, of which you have hitherto been one of the most illustrious champions, in the name of that civilization for which^{22} the greatest of men have striven all down the ages, in the name of the very honor of your Germanic race, Gerhart Hauptmann, I abjure you, I challenge you, you and the intellectuals of Germany, amongst whom I reckon so many friends, to protest with all your energy against this crime which is recoiling upon you.

If you fail to do this, you will prove one of two things: either that you approve what has been done—and in that case may the opinion of mankind crush you—or else that you are powerless to raise a protest against the Huns who command you. If this be so, by what title can you still claim, as you have claimed, that you fight for the cause of liberty and human progress? You are giving the world a proof that, incapable of defending the liberty of the world, you are even incapable of defending your own, and that the best of Germany is helpless beneath a vile despotism which mutilates masterpieces and murders the spirit of man.

I am expecting an answer from you, Hauptmann, an answer that may be an act. The opinion of Europe awaits it as I do. Think about it: at such a time silence itself is an act.

Journal de Genève, Wednesday, Sept. 2, 1914.

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II. PRO ARIS^[5]

Among the many crimes of this infamous war which are all odious to us, why have we chosen for protest the crimes against things and not against men, the destruction of works and not of lives?

Many are surprised by this, and have even reproached us for it—as if we have not as much pity as they for the bodies and hearts of the thousands of victims who are crucified! Yet over the armies which fall, there flies the vision of their love, and of *la Patrie*, to which they sacrifice themselves—over these lives which are passing away passes the holy Ark of the art and thought of centuries, borne on their shoulders. The bearers can change. May the Ark be saved! To the élite of the world falls the task of guarding it. And since the common treasure is threatened, may they rise to protect it!

I am glad to think that in the Latin countries this^[24] sacred duty has always been regarded as paramount. Our France which bleeds with so many other wounds, has suffered nothing more cruel than the attack against her Parthenon, the Cathedral of Rheims, "Our Lady of France." Letters which I have received from sorely tried families, and from soldiers who for two months have borne every hardship, show me (and I am proud of it for them and for my people) that there was no burden heavier for them to bear. It is because we put spirit above flesh. Very different is the case of the German intellectuals, who, to my reproaches for the sacrilegious acts of their devastating armies, have all replied with one voice, "Perish every *chef-d'œuvre* rather than one German soldier!"

A piece of architecture like Rheims is much more than one life; it is a people—whose centuries vibrate like a symphony in this organ of stone. It is their memories of joy, of glory, and of grief; their meditations, ironies, dreams. It is the tree of the race, whose roots plunge to the profoundest depths of its soil, and whose branches stretch with a sublime *élan* towards the sky. It is still more: its beauty which soars above the struggles of nations is the harmonious response made by the human race to^[25] the riddle of the world—this light of the spirit more necessary to souls than that of the sun.

Whoever destroys this work, murders more than a man; he murders the purest soul of a race. His crime is inexpiable, and Dante would have it punished with an eternal agony, eternally renewed. We who repudiate the vindictive spirit of so cruel a genius, do not hold a people responsible for the crimes of a few. The drama which unfolds itself before our eyes, and whose almost certain *dénouement* will be the crushing of the German hegemony, is enough for us.

What brings it home to us most nearly is that not one of those who constitute the moral and intellectual élite of Germany—that hundred noble spirits, and those thousands of brave hearts of which no great nation was ever destitute—not one really suspects the crimes of his Government; the atrocities committed in Flanders, in the north and in the east of France during the two or three first weeks of the war; or (one

can safely wager) the voluntary devastations of the towns of Belgium and the ruin of Rheims. If they came to look at the reality, I know that many of them would weep with grief and shame; and of all the shortcomings of Prussian^{26} Imperialism, the worst and the vilest is to have concealed its crimes from its people. For by depriving them of the means of protesting against those crimes, it has involved them for ever in the responsibility; it has abused their magnificent devotion. The intellectuals, however, are also guilty. For if one admits that the brave men, who in every country tamely feed upon the news which their papers and their leaders give them for nourishment, allow themselves to be duped, one cannot pardon those whose duty it is to seek truth in the midst of error, and to know the value of interested witnesses and passionate hallucinations. Before bursting into the midst of this furious debate upon which was staked the destruction of nations and of the treasures of the spirit, their first duty (a duty of loyalty as much as of common sense) should have been to consider the problems from both sides. By blind loyalty and culpable trustfulness they have rushed head foremost into the net which their Imperialism had spread. They believed that their first duty was, with their eyes closed, to defend the honor of their State against all accusation. They did not see that the noblest means of defending it was to disavow^{27} its faults and to cleanse their country of them....

I have awaited this virile disavowal from the proudest spirits of Germany, a disavowal which would have been ennobling instead of humiliating. The letter which I wrote to one of them, the day after the brutal voice of Wolff's Agency pompously proclaimed that there remained of Louvain no more than a heap of ashes, was received by the entire élite of Germany in a spirit of enmity. They did not understand that I offered them the chance of releasing Germany from the fetters of those crimes which its Empire was forging in its name. What did I ask of them? What did I ask of you all, finer spirits of Germany?—to express at least a courageous regret for the excesses committed, and to dare to remind unbridled power that even the Fatherland cannot save itself through crime, and that above its rights are those of the human spirit. I only asked for *one* voice—a *single* free voice.... None spoke. I heard only the clamor of herds, the pack of intellectuals giving tongue on the track whereon the hunter loosed them, and that insolent Manifesto, in which, without the slightest effort to justify its crimes, you have unanimously declared^{28} that they do not exist. And your theologians, your pastors, your court-preachers, have stated further that you are very just and that you thank God for having made you thus.... Race of Pharisees, what chastisement from on high shall scourge your sacrilegious pride!... Do you not suspect the evil which you have done to your own people? The megalomania, a menace to the world, of an Ostwald or an H. S. Chamberlain,^[6] the criminal determination of ninety-three intellectuals not to wish to see the truth, will have cost Germany more than ten defeats.^{29}

How clumsy you are! I believe that of all your faults *maladresse* is the worst. You have not said one word since the beginning of this war which has not been more fatal for you than all the speeches of your adversaries. It is you who have light-heartedly furnished the proof or the argument of the worst accusations that have been brought

against you; just as your official agencies, under the stupid illusion of terrorizing us, have been the first to launch emphatic recitals of your most sinister devastations. It is you, who when the most impartial of your adversaries were obliged, in fairness, to limit the responsibility of these acts to a few of your leaders and armies, have angrily claimed your share. It is you who the day after the destruction of Rheims, which, in your inmost hearts, should have dismayed the best amongst you, have boasted of it in imbecile pride, instead of trying to clear yourselves.^[7] It is you, wretched creatures, you, representatives of the spirit, who have not ceased^{30} to extol force and to despise the weak, as if you did not know that the wheel of fortune turns, that this force one day will weigh afresh upon you, as in past ages, when your great men, at least, retained the consolation of not having yielded to it the sovereignty of the spirit and the sacred rights of Right!... What reproaches, what remorse are you heaping up for the future, O blind guides—you who are leading into the ditch your nation, which follows you like the stumbling blind men of Brueghel!

What poor arguments you have opposed to us for two months!

1. *War is war*, say you, that is to say without common measure with the rest of things, above morals and reason and all the limits of ordinary life, a kind of supernatural state before which one can only bow without discussion;

2. *Germany is Germany*, that is to say without common measure with the rest of nations. The laws which apply to others do not apply to her, and the rights which she arrogates to herself to violate Right appertain to her alone. Thus she can, without crime, tear up written promises, betray sworn oaths, violate the neutrality of peoples which she^{31} has pledged herself to defend. But she claims in return the right to find, in the nations which she outrages, "chivalrous adversaries," and that they should not be so, that they should dare to defend themselves by all the means and the arms that remain to them, she proclaims a crime!...

One recognizes there indeed the interested teaching of your Prussian masters! Great minds of Germany, I do not doubt your sincerity, but you are no longer capable of seeing the truth. Prussian Imperialism has crushed down over your eyes and conscience, its spiked helmet.

"*Necessity knows no law.*" ... Here is the eleventh commandment, the message that you bring to the universe today, sons of Kant!... We have heard it more than once in history: it is the famous doctrine of Public Safety, mother of heroisms and crimes. Every nation has recourse to it in the hour of danger, but the greatest are those who defend against it their immortal soul. Fifteen years have passed since the famous trial which saw a single innocent man opposed to the force of the State. Fifteen years have passed since we French affronted and shattered the idol of public safety, when it threatened, as our Péguy says, "the eternal safety of France."^{32}

Listen to him, whom you have killed; listen to a hero of the French conscience, writers who have the keeping of the conscience of Germany.

"Our enemies of that time," wrote Charles Péguy, "spoke the language of the raison d'Etat, of the temporal safety of the people and the race. But we, by a profound Christian movement, by a revolutionary effort, at unity with traditional Christianity, aimed at no less than attaining the heights of sacrifice, in our anxiety for the eternal salvation of this people. We did not wish to place France in the position of having committed the unpardonable sin."

You do not trouble yourselves about that, thinkers of Germany. You bravely give your blood to save the mortal life, but do not bother about the life eternal. It is a terrible moment, I grant. Your fatherland as ours struggles for its life, and I understand and admire the ecstasy of sacrifice which impels your youth, as ours, to make of its body a rampart against death. "To be or not to be," do you say? No, that is not enough. To be the great Germany, to be the great France, worthy of their past, and respecting one another even while fighting, that is what I wish. I should blush for victory if my France bought it at the price for which you will pay^{33} for your temporary success. Even while the battles are being fought upon the plains of Belgium and amongst the chalky slopes of Champagne, another war is taking place upon the field of the spirit, and often victory below means defeat above. The conquest of Belgium, Malines, Louvain and Rheims, the carillons of Flanders, will sound a sadder knell in your history than the bells of Jena; and the conquered Belgians have robbed you of your glory. You know it. You are enraged because you know it. What is the good of vainly trying to deceive yourselves? Truth will be clear to you in the end. You have done your best to silence her—one day she will speak; she will speak by the mouth of one of your own in whom will be awakened the conscience of your race.... Oh, that he may soon appear and that we may hear his voice—the pure and noble voice of the redeemer who shall set you free! He who has lived in the intimacy of your old Germany, who has clasped her hand in the twisted streets of her heroic and sordid past, who has caught the breath of her centuries of trials and shames, remembers and waits: for he knows that even if she has never proved strong enough to bear victory without wavering, it is in her hours of^{34}trouble that she reforms herself, and her greatest geniuses are sons of sorrow.

September 1914.

* * *

Since these lines were written I have watched the birth of the anxiety which little by little is making its way into the consciences of the good people of Germany. First a secret doubt, kept under by a stubborn effort to believe the bad arguments collected by their Government to oppose it—documents fabricated to prove that Belgium had renounced her neutrality herself, false allegations (in vain repudiated four times by the French Government, by the Commander-in-Chief, by the Cardinal and the Archbishop, and by the Mayor of Rheims)—accusing the French of using the Cathedral of Rheims for military purposes. Lacking arguments, their system of defense is at times disconcerting in its naïveté.

"Is it possible," they say, "that we should be accused of wishing to destroy artistic monuments, we, the people above all others who venerate art, in whom is instilled this respect from infancy, who have the greatest number of text books and historical collections of art and the longest list of lectures^{35} on æsthetics? Is it possible to accuse of the most barbarous actions the most humane, the most affectionate, and the most homely of peoples?"

The idea never strikes them that Germany is not constituted by a single race of men, and that besides the obedient masses who are born to obey, to respect the law—all the laws—there is the race which commands, which believes itself above all laws, and which makes and unmakes them in the name of force and necessity (*Not...*) It is this evil marriage of idealism and German force which leads to these disasters. The idealism proves to be a woman; a woman captive, who like so many worthy German wives, worships her lord and master, and refuses even to think that he could ever be wrong.

It is, however, necessary for the salvation of Germany that she should one day countenance the thought of divorce, or that the wife should have the courage to make her voice heard in the household. I already know several who are beginning to champion the rights of the spirit against force. Many a German voice has reached us lately in letters protesting against war and deploring with us the injustices which we deplore. I will not give their names in order not to compromise them. Not^{36} very long ago I told the "Fair"^[8] which obstructed Paris that it was not France. I say today to the German Fair, "You are not the true Germany." There exists another Germany juster and more humane, whose ambition is not to dominate the world by force and guile, but to absorb in peace everything great in the thought of other races, and in return to reflect the harmony. With that Germany there is no dispute; we are not her enemies, we are the enemies of those who have almost succeeded in making the world forget that she still lives.

October 1914.

Edition des *Cahiers Vaudois* 10 cahier, 1914 (Lausanne, C. Tarin).^{37}

III. ABOVE THE BATTLE

O young men that shed your blood with so generous a joy for the starving earth! O heroism of the world! What a harvest for destruction to reap under this splendid summer sun! Young men of all nations, brought into conflict by a common ideal, making enemies of those who should be brothers; all of you, marching to your death, are dear to me.^[9] Slavs, hastening to the aid of your race; Englishmen fighting for honor and right; intrepid Belgians who dared to oppose the Teutonic colossus, and defend against him the Thermopylæ of the West; Germans fighting to defend the philosophy and the birthplace of Kant against the Cossack avalanche; and you, above all, my young compatriots, in whom the generation of heroes of the Revolution lives again; you, who for years have confided your^{38} dreams to me, and now, on the verge of battle, bid me a sublime farewell.

Those years of scepticism and gay frivolity in which we in France grew up are avenged in you; your faith, which is ours, you protect from their poisonous influence; and with you that faith triumphs on the battlefield. "A war of revenge" is the cry. Yea! revenge indeed; but in no spirit of Chauvinism. The revenge of faith against all the egotisms of the senses and of the spirit—the surrender of self to eternal ideas.

One of the most powerful of the young French novelists—Corporal X.—writes to me:—

"What are our lives, our books, compared with the magnitude of the aim? The war of the Revolution against feudalism is beginning anew. The armies of the Republic will secure the triumph of democracy in Europe and complete the work of the Convention. We are fighting for more than our hearths and homes, for the awakening of liberty." Another of these young people, of noble spirit and pure heart, who will be, if he lives, the first art critic of our time—Lieutenant X.:—

"My friend, could you see our Army as I do, you would be thrilled with admiration for our people, for this noble race. An enthusiasm, like an outburst of the Marseillaise, thrills them; heroic, earnest, and even religious. I have seen the three divisions of my army corps set out; the men of active service first, young men of twenty marching with firm and rapid steps, without a cry, without a gesture, like^{39} the ephebi of old calmly going to sacrifice. After them come the reserve, men of twenty-five to thirty years, more stalwart and more determined, who will reinforce the younger men and make them irresistible. We, the old men of forty, the fathers of families, are the base of the choir; and we too, I assure you, set out confidently, resolute and unwavering. I have no wish to die, but I can die now without regret; for I have lived through a fortnight, which would be cheap at the price of death, a fortnight which I had not dared to ask of fate. History will tell of us, for we are opening a new era in the world. We are dispelling the nightmare of the materialism of a mailed Germany and of armed peace. It will fade like a phantom before us; the world seems to breathe again. Reassure your Viennese friend,^[10] France is not about to die; it is her resurrection which we see. For throughout history—Bouvines, the Crusades, Cathedrals, the Revolution—we remain the same, the knights-errant of the world, the paladins of God. I have lived long enough to see it fulfilled; and we who prophesied it twenty years ago to unbelieving ears may rejoice today."

O my friends, may nothing mar your joy! Whatever fate has in store, you have risen to the pinnacle of earthly life, and borne your country with you. And you will be victorious. Your self-sacrifice, your courage, your whole-hearted faith in your sacred cause, and the unshaken certainty that, in defending your invaded country,

you are defending^{40} the liberty of the world—all this assures me of your victory, young armies of the Marne and Meuse, whose names are graven henceforth in history by the side of your elders of the Great Republic. Yet even had misfortune decreed that you should be vanquished, and with you France itself, no people could have aspired to a more noble death. It would have crowned the life of that great people of the Crusades—it would have been their supreme victory. Conquerors or conquered, living or dead, rejoice! As one of you said to me, embracing me on the terrible threshold: "A splendid thing it is to fight with clean hands and a pure heart, and to dispense divine justice with one's life."

You are doing your duty, but have others done theirs? Let us be bold and proclaim the truth to the elders of these young men, to their moral guides, to their religious and secular leaders, to the Churches, the great thinkers, the leaders of socialism; these living riches, these treasures of heroism you held in your hands; for what are you squandering them? What ideal have you held up to the devotion of these youths so eager to sacrifice themselves? Their mutual slaughter! A European war! A sacrilegious conflict which shows a maddened^{41} Europe ascending its funeral pyre, and, like Hercules, destroying itself with its own hands!

And thus the three greatest nations of the West, the guardians of civilization, rush headlong to their ruin, calling in to their aid Cossacks, Turks, Japanese, Cingalese, Soudanese, Senegalese, Moroccans, Egyptians, Sikhs and Sepoys—barbarians from the poles and those from the equator, souls and bodies of all colors.^[11] It is as if the four quarters of the Roman Empire at the time of the Tetrarchy had called upon the barbarians of the whole universe to devour each other.

Is our civilization so solid that you do not fear to shake the pillars on which it rests? Can you not see that all falls in upon you if one column be shattered? Could you not have learned if not to love one another, at least to tolerate the great virtues and the great vices of each other? Was it not your duty to attempt—you have never attempted it in sincerity—to settle amicably the questions which divided you, the problem of peoples annexed against their will, the equitable division of productive labor and the riches of the world? Must the stronger forever darken the others with the shadow of his^{42} pride, and the others forever unite to dissipate it? Is there no end to this bloody and puerile sport, in which the partners change about from century to century—no end, until the whole of humanity is exhausted thereby?

The rulers who are the criminal authors of these wars dare not accept the responsibility for them. Each one by underhand means seeks to lay the blame at the door of his adversary. The peoples who obey them submissively resign themselves with the thought that a power higher than mankind has ordered it thus. Again the venerable refrain is heard: "The fatality of war is stronger than our wills." The old refrain of the herd that makes a god of its feebleness and bows down before him. Man has invented fate, that he may make it responsible for the disorders of the universe, those disorders which it was his duty to regulate. There is no fatality! The only fatality is what we desire; and more often, too, what we do not desire enough.

Let each now repeat his *mea culpa*. The leaders of thought, the Church, the Labor Parties did not desire war ... That may be.... What then did they do to prevent it? What are they doing to put an end to it? They are stirring up the bonfire, each one bringing his faggot.^{43}

The most striking feature in this monstrous epic, the fact without precedent, is the unanimity for war in each of the nations engaged. An epidemic of homicidal fury, which started in Tokio ten years ago, has spread like a wave and overflowed the whole world. None has resisted it; no high thought has succeeded in keeping out of the reach of this scourge. A sort of demoniacal irony broods over this conflict of the nations, from which, whatever its result, only a mutilated Europe can emerge. For it is not racial passion alone which is hurling millions of men blindly one against another, so that not even neutral countries remain free of the dangerous thrill, but all the forces of the spirit, of reason, of faith, of poetry, and of science, all have placed themselves at the disposal of the armies in every state. There is not one amongst the leaders of thought in each country who does not proclaim with conviction that the cause of his people is the cause of God, the cause of liberty and of human progress. And I, too, proclaim it.

Strange combats are being waged between metaphysicians, poets, historians—Eucken against Bergson; Hauptmann against Maeterlinck; Rolland against Hauptmann; Wells against Bernard Shaw.^{44} Kipling and D'Annunzio, Dehmel and de Régnier sing war hymns, Barrès and Maeterlinck chant paeans of hatred. Between a fugue of Bach and the organ which thunders *Deutschland über Alles*, Wundt, the aged philosopher of eighty-two, calls with his quavering voice, the students of Leipzig to the holy war. And each nation hurls at the other the name "Barbarians."

The academy of moral science, in the person of its president, Bergson, declares the struggle undertaken against Germany to be "*the struggle of civilization itself against barbarism.*" German history replies with the voice of Karl Lamprecht that "*this is a war between Germanism and barbarism and the present conflict is the logical successor of those against the Huns and Turks in which Germany has been engaged throughout the ages.*" Science, following history into the lists, proclaims through E. Perrier, director of the Museum, member of the Academy of Sciences, that the Prussians do not belong to the Aryan race, but are descended in direct line from the men of the Stone Age called Allophyles, and adds, "*the modern skull, resembling by its base, the best index of the strength of the appetites, the skull of the fossilized man in the*^{45} *Chapelle-aux-Saints most nearly, is none other than that of Prince Bismarck!*"

But the two moral forces whose weakness this contagious war shows up most clearly are Christianity and Socialism. These rival apostles of religious and secular internationalism have suddenly developed into the most ardent of nationalists. Hervé is eager to die for the standard of Austerlitz. The German socialists, pure trustees of the pure doctrine, support this bill of credit for the war in the Reichstag. They place themselves at the disposal of the Prussian minister, who uses their journals to spread

abroad his lies, even into the barracks, and sends them as secret agents to attempt to pervert Italy. It was believed for the honor of their cause for a moment that two or three of them had been shot rather than take arms against their brothers. Indignant, they protest; they are all marching under arms! Liebknecht, forsooth, did not die for the cause of socialism;^[12] but Frank, the principal champion of the Franco-German union, fell under French fire, fighting in the cause of militarism. These men have courage to die for the^{46} faith of others; they have no courage to die for their own.

As for the representatives of the Prince of Peace—priests, pastors, bishops—they go into battle in their thousands, to carry out, musket in hand, the Divine commands: *Thou shalt not kill*, and *Love one another*. Each bulletin of victory, whether it be German, Austrian, or Russian, gives thanks to the great captain God—*unser alter Gott, notre Dieu*—as William II or M. Arthur Meyer says. For each has his own God, and each God, whether old or young, has his Levites to defend him and destroy the God of the others.

Twenty thousand French priests are marching with the colors; Jesuits offer their services to the German armies; cardinals issue warlike mandates; and the Serb bishops of Hungary incite their faithful flocks to fight against their brothers in Greater Serbia. The newspapers report, with no expressions of astonishment, the paradoxical scene at the railway station at Pisa, where the Italian socialists cheered the young ordinands who were rejoining their regiments, all singing the Marseillaise together. So strong the cyclone that sweeps them all before it; so feeble the men it encounters on its career—and I am amongst them....^{47}

Come, friends! Let us make a stand! Can we not resist this contagion, whatever its nature and virulence be—whether moral epidemic or cosmic force? Do we not fight against the plague, and strive even to repair the disaster caused by an earthquake? Or must we bow ourselves before it, agreeing with Luzzatti in his famous article^[13] that "*In the universal disaster, the nations triumph*"? Shall we say with him that it is good and reasonable that "the demon of international war, which mows down thousands of beings, should be let loose," so that the great and simple truth, "love of our country," be understood? It would seem, then, that love of our country can flourish only through the hatred of other countries and the massacre of those who sacrifice themselves in the defense of them. There is in this theory a ferocious absurdity, a Neronian dilettantism which repels me to the very depths of my being. No! Love of my country does not demand that I shall hate and slay those noble and faithful souls who also love theirs, but rather that I should honor them and seek to unite with them for our common good.

You Christians will say—and in this you seek^{48} consolation for having betrayed your Master's orders—that war exalts the virtue of sacrifice. And it is true that war has the privilege of bringing out the genius of the race in the most commonplace of hearts. It purges away, in its bath of blood, all dross and impurity; it tempers the metal of the soul of a niggardly peasant, of a timorous citizen; it can make a hero of Valmy. But is there no better employment for the devotion of one people than the

devastation of another? Can we not sacrifice ourselves without sacrificing our neighbors also? I know well, poor souls, that many of you are more willing to offer your blood than to spill that of others.... But what a fundamental weakness! Confess, then, that you who are undismayed by bullets and shrapnel yet tremble before the dictates of racial frenzy—that Moloch that stands higher than the Church of Christ—the jealous pride of race. You Christians of today would not have refused to sacrifice to the gods of Imperial Rome; you are not capable of such courage! Your Pope Pius X died of grief to see the outbreak of this war—so it is said. And not without reason. The Jupiter of the Vatican who hurled thunderbolts upon those inoffensive priests who believed in the^{49} noble chimera of modernism—what did he do against those princes and those criminal rulers whose measureless ambition has given the world over to misery and death? May God inspire the new Pontiff who has just ascended the throne of St. Peter, with words and deeds which will cleanse the Church from the stain of this silence.

As for you socialists who on both sides claim to be defending liberty against tyranny—French liberty against the Kaiser, German liberty against the Czar, is it a question of defending one despotism against another? Unite and attack both.

There was no reason for war between the Western nations; French, English, and German, we are all brothers and do not hate one another. The war-preaching press is envenomed by a minority, a minority vitally interested in maintaining these hatreds; but our peoples, I know, ask for peace and liberty and that alone. The real tragedy, to one situated in the midst of the conflict and able to look down from the high plateaus of Switzerland into all the hostile camps, is the patent fact that actually each of the nations is being menaced in its dearest possessions—in its honor, its independence, its life. Who has brought these plagues upon them? Brought^{50} them to the desperate alternative of overwhelming their adversary or dying? None other than their governments, and above all, in my opinion, the three great culprits, the three rapacious eagles, the three empires, the tortuous policy of the house of Austria, the ravenous greed of Czarism, the brutality of Prussia. The worst enemy of each nation is not without, but within its frontiers, and none has the courage to fight against it. It is the monster of a hundred heads, the monster named Imperialism, the will to pride and domination, which seeks to absorb all, or subdue all, or break all, and will suffer no greatness except itself. For the Western nations Prussian imperialism is the most dangerous. Its hand uplifted in menace against Europe has forced us to join in arms against this outcome of a military and feudal caste, which is the curse not only of the rest of the world but also of Germany itself, whose thought it has subtly poisoned. We must destroy this first: but not this alone; the Russian autocracy too will have its turn. Every nation to a greater or less extent has an imperialism of its own, and whether it be military, financial, feudal, republican, social, or intellectual, it is always the octopus sucking the best blood of Europe. Let^{51} the free men of all the countries of Europe when this war is over take up again the motto of Voltaire: "*Ecrasons l'infâme!*"

When the war is over! The evil is done now, the torrent let loose and we cannot force it back into its channel unaided. Moreover crimes have been committed against right, attacks on the liberties of peoples and on the sacred treasuries of thought, which must and will be expiated. Europe cannot pass over unheeded the violence done to the noble Belgian people, the devastation of Malines and Louvain, sacked by modern Tillys.... But in the name of heaven let not these crimes be expiated by similar crimes! Let not the hideous words "vengeance" and "retaliation" be heard; for a great nation does not revenge itself, it re-establishes justice. But let those in whose hands lies the execution of justice show themselves worthy of her to the end.

It is our duty to keep this before them; nor will we be passive and wait for the fury of this conflict to spend itself. Such conduct would be unworthy of us who have such a task before us.

Our first duty, then, all over the world, is to insist on the formation of a moral High Court, a^{52} tribunal of consciences, to watch and pass impartial judgment on any violations of the laws of nations. And since committees of inquiry formed by belligerents themselves would be always suspect, the neutral countries of the old and new world must take the initiative, and form a tribunal such as was suggested by Mr. Prenant,^[14] professor of medicine at Paris, and taken up enthusiastically by M. Paul Seippel in the *Journal de Genève*.^[15]

"They should produce men of some worldly authority, and of proved civic morality to act as a commission of inquiry, and to follow the armies at a little distance. Such an organization would complete and solidify the Hague Court, and prepare indisputable documents for the necessary work of justice...."

The neutral countries are too much effaced. Confronted by unbridled force they are inclined to believe that opinion is defeated in advance, and the majority of thinkers in all countries share their pessimism. There is a lack of courage here as well as of clear thinking. For just at this time the power of opinion is immense. The most despotic of governments, even though marching to victory, trembles^{53} before public opinion and seeks to court it. Nothing shows this more clearly than the efforts of both parties engaged in war, of their ministers, chancellors, sovereigns, of the Kaiser himself turned journalist, to justify their own crimes, and denounce the crimes of their adversary at the invisible tribunal of humanity. Let this invisible tribunal be seen at last, let us venture to constitute it. Ye know not your moral power, O ye of little faith! If there be a risk, will you not take it for the honor of humanity? What is the value of life when you have saved it at the price of all that is worth living for?...

Et propter vitam, vivendi perdere causas....

But for us, the artists and poets, priests and thinkers of all countries, remains another task. Even in time of war it remains a crime for finer spirits to compromise the integrity of their thought; it is shameful to see it serving the passion of a puerile, monstrous policy of race, a policy scientifically absurd—since no country possesses a race wholly pure. Such a policy, as Renan points out in his beautiful letter to

Strauss,^[16] "can only lead to^{54} zoological wars, wars of extermination, similar to those in which various species of rodents and carnivorous beasts fight for their existence. This would be the end of that fertile admixture called humanity, composed as it is of such various necessary elements." Humanity is a symphony of great collective souls; and he who understands and loves it only by destroying a part of those elements, proves himself a barbarian and shows his idea of harmony to be no better than the idea of order another held in Warsaw.

For the finer spirits of Europe there are two dwelling-places: our earthly fatherland, and that other City of God. Of the one we are the guests, of the other the builders. To the one let us give our lives and our faithful hearts; but neither family, friend, nor fatherland, nor aught that we love has power over the spirit. The spirit is the light. It is our duty to lift it above tempests, and thrust aside the clouds which threaten to obscure it; to build higher and stronger, dominating the injustice and hatred of nations, the walls of that city wherein the souls of the whole world may assemble.

I feel here how the generous heart of Switzerland^{55} is thrilled, divided between sympathies for the various nations, and lamenting that it cannot choose freely between them, nor even express them. I understand its torment; but I know that this is salutary. I hope it will rise thence to that superior joy of a harmony of races, which may be a noble example for the rest of Europe. It is the duty of Switzerland now to stand in the midst of the tempest, like an island of justice and of peace, where, as in the great monasteries of the early Middle Ages, the spirit may find a refuge from unbridled force; where the fainting swimmers of all nations, those who are weary of hatred, may persist, in spite of all the wrongs they have seen and suffered, in loving all men as their brothers.

I know that such thoughts have little chance of being heard today. Young Europe, burning with the fever of battle, will smile with disdain and show its fangs like a young wolf. But when the access of fever has spent itself, wounded and less proud of its voracious heroism, it will come to itself again.

Moreover I do not speak to convince it. I speak but to solace my conscience ... and I know that at the same time I shall solace the hearts of thousands of others who, in all countries, cannot or dare not speak themselves.

Journal de Genève, September 15, 1914.^{56}

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