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MUTTERINGS OF WAR IN EUROPE.

HAPPY Americans, whose powerful republic spreads over a whole continent, without fear of encroachment, and, so to say, without either army or fleet; justly confident in your incalculable latent strength, you must find it somewhat difficult to understand that the states of Europe are continually arming and ever on the point of disputing over a few provinces not equivalent to the territories which are every year cleared and brought under cultivation by your increasing population. At such a distance you cannot imagine how truly terrible and tragic the actual situation of Europe is; never was there anything similar in the preceding centuries.

Every one is convinced that at any moment so horrible a war may break out, that all other wars, even that of secession in America, will be but child's play in comparison. The adversaries which we foresee obliged to take up arms, Russia and France on the one side, Germany, Austria, and Italy on the other, will bring seven millions of men on the battlefield, with a reserve of ten millions. By means of the rapid concentration rendered possible by the railways, we shall witness, even during the first few days, two collisions, one in the east, the other in the west, in which three millions of human beings will be seen struggling together; for both sides will endeavor to crush their enemy under

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the attack of innumerable masses. No strategist, not even Moltke himself, can foresee what such a conflict will be like; all we can say is, that the number of killed and wounded will, in one day, surpass that of an entire war of former times. Human blood will never have soaked the earth in such streams. And what is most terrible, this struggle is considered by all as inevitable; and we see how all the states, even the smaller and neutral ones, are preparing for it. Every year, the European nations, pacific England, Switzerland, and Belgium included, apply millions to the construction of forts and iron-clads, to the perfecting of arms, and increasing the number of cannons and men. France, for example, has surrounded her frontiers and her capital with a continuous line of forts and entrenchments. Germany has made Metz, Strasburg, Mayence, and Cologne into gigantic fortresses, which are absolutely impregnable. Italy fortifies her Alpine passes, her sea-ports, and even the Eternal City itself. Belgium is just now spending forty millions of francs in the construction of redoubts with cupolas of steel, to close the passage by the Maas valley. The war budgets are everywhere increasing in enormous proportions. Every now and then an incident occurs which causes us to think that the moment of the decisive struggle is at hand. Now it is a French subject unjustly arrested by the Germans on the frontier; now it is Russia that, after having forced the Prince of Battenberg to leave Sophia, sends General Kaulbars there to threaten the Bulgarians with the arrival of the Cossacks; again, it is the abdication of King Milan of Servia that makes us fear Austrian intervention at Belgrade. And it is under this continual menace of the most frightful shock of armies that our planet will ever have looked upon, that we live. And the most extraordinary thing is, that we get used to it. We go about our business, our pleasures; we rush in crowds from all parts to the Paris exhibition, while each one says: It may be for to-morrow!

What are the questions which thus endanger the peace of Europe? There are two principal ones, well known to all, that of Alsace-Lorraine, and the Eastern question. The former is the more difficult to solve, but not so imminently threatening. The latter presents a self-indicated solution, but it is fuller of danger, being left to chance and the unforeseen.

That which, it seems to me, might be done for Alsace, would be to constitute it a free and neutral country, like a canton of Switzerland, to which it might be annexed by a federal tie. In this manner the *Lothar-ring* would be re-established; which, forming with Belgium and Luxemburg a "ring," a belt of small neutral states, would constitute a barrier between Germany and France, and thus prevent the continual frictions between these two powerful rivals. As to the Eastern question, I will also try to point out the arrangement which to me seems the best, but only after having shown what antagonisms are to be met with.

To understand the weight and importance of the difficulties which imperil the peace of Europe, it is necessary to remember that they are really caused by the movement of transformation which agitates the European populations, and which is nothing but the question of nationalities. I think it best to give on this head a short summary of what I said in my book, "The Actual Causes of War in Europe." *

So long as the enslaved peoples were unconscious of that which constituted their ethnical unity, they permitted themselves to be governed and parceled out like herds of cattle. In the Treaty of Vienna a share was allotted to each sovereign, by giving him so many millions or thousands of souls, without regard to their requirements, their race, or their language. It was thus ever since the middle ages, when a king, a duke, or a count enlarged his territory by marriage, purchase, or conquest, just as if the lands thus acquired had no inhabitants. During the course of the past century all has changed. It is by their literature that the different peoples have become conscious of their worth. They learned to read, and they have read! To them were addressed the rhymes of their poets, whose songs became the common patrimony of one same race, awaking in them the sentiment of a common country. Learned men brought to light ancient *lieder* which gave, as it were, titles of nobility to the nationality of which they were the expression. Thus the "*Nibelungenlied*" for the Germans, the "*Libussal*" for the Czechs. By degrees, as the progress of democracy enabled the populations to obtain elected representative bodies, the necessity for a common lan-

* Paris: Guillaumin.

guage and to be grouped according to their ethnical affinities made itself more and more felt. Under the autocratic *régime*, a sovereign may govern twenty different races of people, but the moment these different races find themselves able to manage their affairs themselves, by means of deliberative assemblies, they will tend to the formation of a national unity, based on the identity of origin and race. When a nationality is thus constituted, it has no rest till it has drawn to it and annexed the territories where its language is spoken, and which are still subject to another sovereignty. This, then, is the powerful movement of nationality which has so changed the map of Europe and which is still modifying it. It is here we must seek the reasons for new wars.

Like dead men leaving their graves, the nationalities we thought annihilated have risen again, aspiring to an independent and autonomous life. So it is with the Finns in Finland; the Flemings in Belgium; the Hungarians, Czechs, Croats, and Slovaks in Austria; the Roumanians, Servians, Bulgarians, and Greeks in the region of the Danube and the Balkans.

The first step in this movement was the rising of the Hellenes, which led to the constitution of the Kingdom of Greece. In 1830, a revolution in the Netherlands created the kingdom of Belgium. Then began that work of fermentation which prepared German and Italian unity. Poland has twice endeavored to reconquer her independence by arms; twice she has been crushed under the staff of the Russian colossus; but she does not yet despair. Hungary, more fortunate, has been reconstituted, and, renouncing the use of Latin as an official language, has replaced it by the Magyar. The war of 1859 was made by France in behalf of the Italian nationality, to which Lombardy was joined. The Danish war, from which sprang the ulterior ones, was intended to join Holstein, inhabited by a German population, to Germany. The war of 1866 laid the foundation of German unity, and completed the unification of Italy. The war of 1870 made Rome the capital of Italy and definitely constituted German unity; at the same time Germany tore Alsace from France, claiming it as German territory, and alleging strategic necessities. Here also it is the principle of nationality, pushed to the extreme,

which endangers peace. But it is in the East that this principle gives rise to the most menacing difficulties. There, indeed, it concerns not only two empires, Austria and Turkey, but also the future of the whole continent.

Let us first consider the situation of Austria. It is very serious, for in her bosom six or seven different nationalities struggle and clash—Germans, Hungarians, Czechs, Poles, Croats, Slovaks, and Roumanians. At the present time the Germans and Hungarians share the direction of the dual Empire, but the Czechs are clamoring for the re-establishment of the ancient kingdom of Bohemia; the Croats, too, demand autonomy and the annexation of Bosnia, Dalmatia, and perhaps the territory peopled by the Slovenes. The Poles in Galicia have already replaced the German language by their own in the schools and in the administrative offices, and, with the aid of successive events, they are preparing a re-constitution of the ancient kingdom of Poland. The Roumanians, who form the majority in Transylvania, dream of a union with their compatriots in the neighboring kingdom of Roumania. Satisfaction might perhaps be given to all by transforming Austro-Hungary into a federal state; but would it possess that military force, that rapidity of movement indispensable to a country closed in on one side by Germany and on the other by Russia? Indeed, it is the rivalry of Austria and Russia which, more than anything else at the present moment, puts the peace of Europe in danger; and this is the point which must be well understood.

In 1876 the Russians made war on Turkey, under the pretext of the principle of nationality, to free their Bulgarian and Servian brethren from the yoke of the Mussulmans. Being victorious, they created, by the treaty of St. Stephano imposed upon the vanquished Sultan, Great Bulgaria, which comprised nearly the whole of Turkey in Europe. Of this new state, governed *à la russe*, and organized by Russian officers, they hoped to make a satrapy which would open to them the road to Constantinople.

At the treaty of Berlin, England and Austria thought they were doing wonders in cutting the Bulgaria of St. Stephano into three parts—northern Bulgaria, capital Sophia, almost entirely freed; southern Bulgaria, capital Philippopolis, still a vassal

state; and lastly, Macedonia, kept in subjection. This was a deplorable mistake, for, instead of one strong and united Bulgaria, which before long would have freed itself from the Russian predominance, it has given rise to an unstable situation, already shaken by the revolution which has re-united North and South Bulgaria, and which may be definitely compromised by a rising in Macedonia. Prince Ferdinand, who now reigns, is detested by Russia, as being a Roman Catholic and an Austrian officer. If it were not for the fear of kindling war, the Cossacks would long since have overthrown him; and to-day the Russians undermine his throne in every possible manner. They cannot easily resign themselves to seeing the Bulgarians, whom they have freed at the cost of their blood and their gold, altogether escape from their influence, and even perhaps turn against them.

On the other hand, Austria has become entangled in the Balkan rivalries by occupying Bosnia. Two motives decided her to this—a dynastic motive and a motive of national interest. As regards the dynastic motive, the Emperor Francis Joseph, having lost Venetia and Lombardy, was unwilling to leave his states diminished at his death, and he eagerly seized the opportunity of finding a compensation in Bosnia, to which he is said to cling passionately. Then there is the motive of national interest. Austria had an interest in pushing, as it were, a barrier between Servia and Montenegro, so that no state could be formed there capable of one day annexing Croatia, Servian by language as well as by race.*

It is here that we see arise the antagonism of Austria and Russia, on which the future of our continent partially depends. Russia will not allow Austria to establish her influence definitively in the Balkan peninsula, which she has freed; and, on the other hand, Austria will not allow Russia to occupy Bulgaria, for the inevitable consequence of such an occupation would be the possession of Constantinople and of the greater part of the peninsula. From that moment the independence of Greece and Servia would be worthless, and the situation of Austria in Bosnia (a province that Servia energetically claims) would become precarious and at length untenable.

* See my book, "The Balkan Peninsula."

There is one fact, as important as it is little known, which we must not lose sight of, when we reflect on the future of eastern Europe: it is the enormous space which the Slavonic race there occupies. Cast a look on Kiepert's ethnographical map, and you will see that the Slavs, with their various ramifications, cover, first, the immense Russian Empire; then nearly the whole Balkan peninsula, Poland, Bohemia, a great part of Cisleithania; advancing toward the west as far as Trieste, and almost to the chain of the Erzgebirge; that is to say, they spread over three-quarters of Europe. Besides, Russia possesses central Asia, a part of Asia Minor, and all northern Asia as far as the Chinese Sea, where hundreds of millions of men might easily subsist. Already the number of her inhabitants approaches a hundred millions, and long before the end of the next century it will be two hundred millions. Little by little she advances toward the Sea of Marmora by Armenia and the southern coast of the Black Sea, which will fall to her share in the first war with Turkey. A hundred years hence, leaving China out of the question, there will be two colossal powers in the world, beside which Germany, England, France, and Italy will be as pigmies—the United States and Russia

The question of the present moment is this: Can Austria, who has a greater number of Slavs among her population than of any other race, allow Russia to establish herself in the Balkan peninsula, the consequence more or less remote of which would be the parceling out of Austro-Hungary, and the triumph of Panslavism? The clearly-defined perspective of this peril renders Austria extremely sensitive to all that takes place in Bulgaria and Servia, and has led her to accept the alliance with Germany. The antagonism between Russia and Austria is so apparent that the traveler in the East finds it to be the usual subject of conversation, among diplomatists as well as in the villages of the country, where people are thoroughly convinced that war between these two powers is inevitable and near.

Doubtless the reader remembers the treaty of alliance between Austria and Germany recently made public, to the astonishment of Europe, by Prince Bismarck. This treaty foresees the case of an attack on the Austrian provinces by Russia, and obliges

the German army to come to the aid of the Austrians. The tension of the situation is so great that the most trivial incidents on the Danube assume an extraordinary importance and might provoke a general war in Europe. One of these recent incidents was the abdication of King Milan of Servia. Immediately Austria was in a state of great anxiety. The Emperor and his two ministers, Kálnoky and Tisza, did not conceal the gravity of possible eventualities. Funds were at once demanded for the completion of armaments; the value of public stocks fell, and ever since has remained unsteady. Imminent war is spoken of in all parts, and the plans of campaign are already discussed in the newspapers. The danger consists in this: King Milan, who was entirely devoted to Austria, has been succeeded by a regency which does not hide its sympathies with Russia. So long as the direction of affairs remains in the hands of Mr. Ristics, who is a sincere patriot as well as an experienced statesman, probably nothing will happen in Servia to bring about extreme measures on the part of Austria; but should the Radicals come into power, openly preaching the idea of a Great Servia, annexing Bosnia and provoking risings in that province, Austria might be brought to interfere. This could be done by establishing a blockade against Servia on the Danube, which would not necessarily lead to war; but if an Austrian corps came to occupy Belgrade, would not Russia make a move on her side? What would she do? Would she send her Cossacks into Bulgaria, or, as certain diplomatists pretend, to Constantinople? Would she make for herself a footing on the shores of the Bosphorus? What would the other powers do in such a case, notably England? Would the latter leave the capital of the Ottoman Empire in the hands of the Russians? This would be a constant threat to Egypt and the Suez Canal, firstly by sea, but principally overland, a corps of the Russian army always being able to advance toward Suez by Asia Minor and Syria. We thus see what redoubtable prospects spread out before our anxious eyes.

Happily it appears certain that pacific sentiments predominate in the councils of potentates. The Emperor of Austria will do all in his power to avoid a conflict which might cost him so dear. The Emperor of Russia, who is not very well known, has given

proofs that he will not lightly go to war, since he has not dared to put into execution the threats made by General Kaulbars against Bulgaria. Prince Bismarck, who it is said does all he can to draw Russia into the triple alliance, has but one aim—to maintain the *status quo*. The young Emperor of Germany, whose warlike spirit was so feared, speaks nothing but words of peace wherever he goes. Lastly, France, justly proud of the splendors of her exhibition, busy with the difficult problems of her home politics, has certainly no intention of giving the signal for the supreme struggle. Let us hope that such a day may not so soon arrive, for it is probable that the whole of Europe will be dragged into the conflict.

But supposing that a collision takes place between Russians and Austrians in the Balkan peninsula, Germany, according to the letter of the Alliance treaty, would not be obliged to interfere; but as the possession of Bosnia is probably guaranteed to Austria, she could not quietly look on, weapons in hand, at the defeat of her ally. There is no treaty of alliance between France and Russia, but, as Bismarck has said, such an alliance always exists, imposed by the necessities of the situation. So France, in her turn, would feel herself obliged to come to the help of Russia, and, according to an agreement imprudently made, Italy would also be led into the field. England, too, doubtless most unwillingly, might be drawn into the general fray, if the victories of the Russians led them to Constantinople or to the shores of the Bosphorus by Armenia. It is very difficult to foresee the issue of this immense conflagration and the changes it would produce in the map of Europe.

It is sad to think that such grave events may depend on a whim of a few hot-headed Servian patriots; yet in this instance, as everywhere else in history, the situation is caused by the slow evolution of struggling forces; the determining cause alone seems to depend on chance. Pascal, speaking of the death of Cromwell, said: "A grain of sand placed there, has changed the face of the world." The face of the world changes by virtue of profound causes; the grain of sand is only the accident, but it is this accident which is especially striking to men.

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