

**SAINT GEORGE; A NATIONAL  
REVIEW DEALING WITH LITERATURE,  
ART AND SOCIAL QUESTIONS IN A  
BROAD AND PROGRESSIVE SPIRIT.  
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**J. H. WHITEHOUSE**

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ART, EDUCATION, AND SOCIAL QUESTIONS IN A  
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VOLUME XII. 1909

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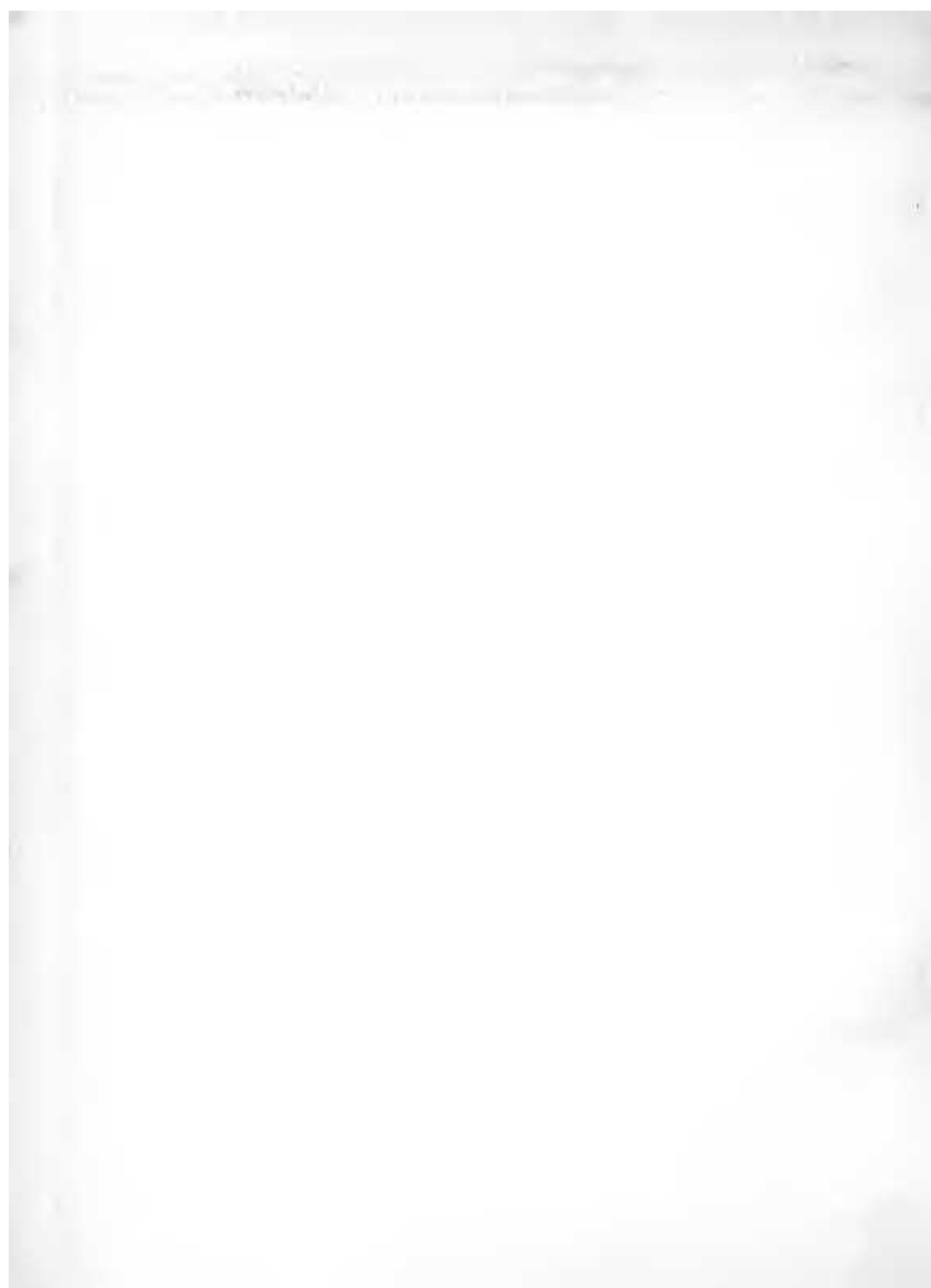


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# SAINT GEORGE

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January, 1909.

## THE KAISER AND GREAT BRITAIN

BY PROFESSOR C. H. HERFORD

**T**HE famous conversation with the Kaiser, published two months ago in the *Daily Telegraph*, may now presumably be regarded as a closed incident. The press, on both sides of the North Sea, has spoken its mind; a great debate in the Reichstag has, in Germany at least, done much to clear the air; and the great Culprit himself, magnanimously overlooking his Chancellor's plain-speaking (somewhat as Falstaff "forgave" his hostess for reminding him of his debt), stands forth none the less, in the eyes of Europe, effectively rebuked. Invasion does not appear to be imminent in either country; and the brigade of boys which the proprietors of a weekly contemporary are understood to have organized to intercept the Kaiser's airship, has resumed its ordinary duties.

But the susceptibilities which the incident so fiercely excited are still sore; and if it has done something to place the relations between the Kaiser and his own people on a sounder and more constitutional basis, it is very doubtful whether it has not

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introduced fresh elements of irritation between the two peoples themselves. For this result, however, one of the two peoples is more peculiarly responsible—the one to which the published “conversation” was immediately addressed. By its amazing reception of this public confidence the larger part of the English press perversely complicated a very simple situation, and gave, one must be permitted to say, as glaring an illustration as has been given in our time of that disease of international obtuseness from which no nation, however vast and manifold its international relations, is altogether exempt, but which sometimes visits the island-empire on which the sun never sets with a virulence that is the despair of its best friends.

“You English are mad—mad as March-hares!” One surmises that not a few dispassionate English readers, recalling these now famous words, will, after this interval, privately admit that it looked like it. The Kaiser’s trouble with his own people is that he is too openly partial to England. He has at times committed grave indiscretions in order to do us a good turn, or to demonstrate his good will. At other times he has been, in his people’s eyes, for no better purpose, culpably discreet. The plan of campaign against the Boers, sent to Windsor for Lord Roberts’s benefit, was a breach of diplomatic convention Quixotic in its extravagance, if it were not that Quixote’s plan of campaign would have been against Lord Roberts, and sent to the Boers. His refusal, on the other hand, to receive the Boer delegates was, for his own people, an exasperating example of “correctness” under circumstances when, if ever, the higher justice involved and warranted the suspension of the lower. All this, however, has availed little to break down the cynical scepticism with which his attitude towards England is regarded by an influential section of the English public and press. His “deep plots pall,” and yet his “indiscretions” do not “serve him well,” but are taken for peculiarly insidious manifestations of the deep plot. In the “conversa-

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tion" here in question he expressed his mind about this with very natural if imprudent warmth. The whole talk is the impulsive outburst of a man who heartily admires England, but who cannot restrain his soreness at its cynical repulse of his friendship, and openly-expressed disbelief in his friendly professions. Yet it was received and commented on as the invective of an enemy at heart—a prolonged and serious menace thinly disguised in amicable phrase. But he said: "This is an insult which I resent"? Well, crafty enemies do not publish their resentment so frankly; and resentment at the repulse of proffered good will is apt to vary in intensity with the good will repelled. Is this temper really dangerous? Some of our contemporaries published columns of alarmed speculation on the consequences that were to be feared if some "firebrand statesman," some Palmerston or Chamberlain, happening to be in power, should find it difficult to restrain himself from "answering back." Surely the statesman who thought of retorting upon such resentment in such a fashion would have to be some schoolboy fresh from the crude pugnacities of the playground, not a Prime Minister of England. The really dangerous temperament in these matters is that curious mixture of excessive alarm with excessive bellicosity, often found in old ladies, both in private life and—in the press.

But the whole object of the conversation was obviously, another class of critic explains, to embroil us with France. The Kaiser's allusion to French proposals of intervention in the Boer war was the most regrettable, as it was the most amazingly imprudent, item in the whole revelation. It in no way affected the cordiality of our relations with France, nor was there any reason why it should, be the allegation as true as it might. For it related to a time some years before the conclusion of the *entente*. But the attitude of exemplary calm, preserved with such admirable ease by the English press, rested for the most part on a thoroughly cynical foundation: the