

GERMANY'S HOUR OF DESTINY

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Germany's Hour of Destiny by H. Frobenius

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GERMANY'S HOUR OF DESTINY

BY
COLONEL H. FROBENIUS

WITH PREFACE BY
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INTRODUCTION

BY WILLIAM R. SHEPHERD *

The little book, of which the following is a translation, first appeared last March and has already entered upon its twelfth edition. It is the German answer to a work written some years ago by Homer Lea, an American soldier who won fame at the time of the Boxer outbreak in China. Frank, earnest, genuine in tone and in statement, it offers a clear-cut study of the international situation that brought on the present war. It possesses, also, the great merit of brevity.

In this book one finds naught of the "mailed fist," of "sabre-rattling" or any of the other bogies which the opponents of Germany and her ally conjure up. It strives, instead, to explain, calmly and logically, what a German patriot believes to be his country's viewpoint. It is just the sort of document that should appeal to the American reader of open mind who refuses to allow the quantity, rather than the quality, of information to aid him in framing his judgment. It serves not to shake our neutrality, but to strengthen it.

The author describes the motives and aims of the chief powers now engaged in the struggle across the seas. For many years they have been playing a gigantic game. The moves and counter-moves, indeed, can be traced for centuries

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on the map of the world. Diplomatically they have reached a deadlock. Choosing, then, to ignore the fact that Germany has spent far less on armaments than they have, and accusing her of a "militarism," which, however, has kept the peace for more than forty years, her three great antagonists have been preparing to break the peace and to use the armaments: Russia—to throw down the walls of Berlin and Vienna, which bar the way to Constantinople and the North Atlantic; England—to dismantle the fleet that guards a growing merchant marine, and France—to regain the territories lost in an earlier war.

From a national standpoint, as nations are constituted today, the desires of Russia, England and France are perfectly legitimate; but so also are the interests of Germany and Austria-Hungary. It is only fair, therefore, that the American who loves his country and hates hypocrisy should "hear the other side," especially when it is presented in so candid and straightforward a fashion.

GERMANY'S HOUR OF DESTINY

BY COLONEL H. FROBENIUS, RETIRED

It cannot be said that the federation of the German States and the renaissance of the German Empire in 1870-71 aroused great satisfaction in any European country. It seemed to the Great Powers that the political balance in Europe had been disturbed by the fact that, in the central region, which hitherto had supplied them with a welcome battleground for their struggles, there had arisen a power which commanded respect; and they were able to instill such fear of "plunder-loving Germany," and of her "greed for territory," in the smaller states, that even to-day the experience of forty-three years of peace has been unable to eradicate it. Yet by placing a great restraint upon itself, even to the extent of occasionally waiving its lawful rights, this new Empire, strong by reason of its military force, has proven itself a rock of security, and is chiefly responsible for these long years of peace.

There has indeed been no lack of pretexts for war during this period, and often the great statesmanship of a Bismarck was necessary to extinguish, before it was too late, the glowing spark which threatened to set fire to all Europe. However, since Russia is no longer bound by any treaty, since her interests have driven France into the arms of Russia, and since England believes her economic and military supremacy in the world at large to be threatened by Germany, conditions are beginning to shape themselves so unfavorably for the German Empire that its patience will be unable to endure the policy of annoyance much longer, and

the probability of a warlike solution at not too distant a time must be reckoned with. Let us examine what would be the interests of the chief, and therefore most dangerous opponents of Germany in such a war, which would doubtless involve the whole of Europe.

I. GREAT BRITAIN

An American, but an enthusiastic Anglo-Saxon, Homer Lea, published a book a short time ago, "The Day of the Saxon," translated by Count E. Reventlow, as "Des Britischen Reiches Schicksalsstunde" (Berlin, 1913, E. S. Mittler & Son). In this he describes the dangers which have threatened the British world empire, since it has lost so much of its former prowess and has neglected its preparations for war (so far as a sufficient land force is concerned), to such an extent that it is no longer in a position to protect its gigantic possessions all over the world. "The old ideals," he says, "that made possible the Empire have been put aside. The militant spirit has become of secondary consideration; it is now hardly more than the spirit of trade, lazy and satisfied with the accumulation of things which are useless to national and racial progress." On the other hand this world empire, extending over the whole earth and embracing all its principal regions, presents enormous difficulties in the way of the expansion of other nations. Consequently, a conflict with the principal states that are in urgent need of expansion, Germany and Japan, is inevitable, springing as it does from interests vital to the life of these states. In the case of Russia, however, which still has a vast territory at the disposal of her steadily increasing population, the motive for expansion lies in a natural endeavor to secure an assured means of communication with the ocean. According to Homer Lea, Germany seems to be England's most dangerous opponent; indeed, England should never have permitted it to become united. She should rather have taken advantage of the dis-

union and dissension of Europe after Napoleon to make herself mistress of the European continent. Whether she had the opportunity and power to do it, the author does not consider. Indeed, since 1870, Germany has actually become a dangerous—not opponent—but rival of England in the markets of the world. The first blow at England's highly developed industry was made by Alfred Krupp, as early as the London World's Fair of 1851, when to the greatest achievement of the English steel industry, a block of 1,000 pounds, he opposed a similar one of 4,400 pounds; and when, in the World's Fair of 1862, in addition to a block of 4,000 pounds, he was able to exhibit breech-loading guns and huge propeller-shafts for ships, he won for the German iron industry the first place which had so long been claimed by the English. The perfect efficiency of his movable campaign-guns in the war of 1870-71 secured German gun-making a place in the world which, thanks to the untiring energy of our manufacturers, could not be disturbed even by the great efforts of English industry. Energetic representatives of other industries, too, rushed into the breach made by Krupp, and the resultant commerce, spreading to all parts of the world, soon enabled Germany to become an important rival in the world market.

She was not yet a dangerous one, because as long as the British fleet had undisputed control of all the sea-routes, if it came to the worst, the German merchant marine could, at the first favorable opportunity, be swept off the sea with little delay. The war of trade began to be dangerous only when Germany commenced to build warships to protect her commerce, and finally proceeded from a purely defensive coast protection to the construction of a fleet of war which developed into a considerable factor in German military power. The political causes for the opposition of England are due to an astonishing and obvious enough fear of German naval power. In order to make plain the motives which have hitherto shaped England's policy, let us review her past.