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AUSTIN HARRISON

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REPUBLISHED FROM
'THE OBSERVER'

BY

AUSTIN HARRISON

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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PREFACE

THESE letters, which appeared originally in *The Observer*, are reproduced, with the kind permission of Lord Northcliffe, at the request of a number of people known and unknown to me, who thought them worthy of preservation. A few corrections and expurgations have been made, and they have been slightly added to. Otherwise they stand as I wrote them, partly while travelling abroad. If they suffer from tautology, I would submit the opinion of De Quincey, that in a newspaper tautology is a virtue; as for the iterative method, that, in dealing with a problem of this nature, was part of my deliberate intention.

Since they were written a calm has fallen upon Europe; the relations between England, Germany, and France have sensibly improved. Not one whit the less the problem of power

and Empire remains—I claim—as it is here stated.

For the rest, as the German Queen, “Great Catherine” of Russia, said: “All politics are based on the three words—circumstance, conjecture and conjuncture.” The wise State provides accordingly.

August 1907.

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CHAPTER I

THE APRIL WAR SCARE

To an island people like ourselves—safe in the investiture of the sea, with no boundaries to protect, and no army (as Continental peoples understand the term) to defend them—a “war panic,” whether actual or latent, is a state of national unrest happily unknown, and to most Englishmen, even as an idea, almost unintelligible. The very word “panic” is un-English and foreign to the native spirit. We are on the eve of The Hague Conference. English editors are shortly to be entertained in Germany. To us the world seems full of good things. Our Liberal organs see no panic anywhere, no unrest, no crisis, no sign of disturbance, nothing but good-will, fraternity, peace, and political concord among all Sovereigns and all peoples in Europe and elsewhere.

Have we not Mr. Stead on the cosmopolitical peace "stump"; Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman wielding a journalistic pen on behalf of disarmament in *The Nation*, and the *Daily News* throwing out mysterious doubts as to the political wisdom of the King's travelling politics; while only the other day Mr. Beer-bohm Tree, standing in a box with the Crown Prince and Princess of Germany, was compelled for very safety to thank his generous audience for their enthusiastic reception?

To write, then, of a German war panic will, I am prepared to hear, be treated as a good or bad "joke" by some, dismissed as sensational journalese by others, and, no doubt, be anathematised by the Liberal Press, by Peace hunters, idealogues, and humanitarian publicists as a flagitious attempt to sow discord and enmity at the very moment when "Noah" in all his wisdom is bidding the militant "barbarians" of the Continent to enter the Ark of Peace in the shady grove called the *Huis ten Bosch*. And yet in sober earnest I assert that all through April a very real war panic existed in Germany, and that at this moment a "crisis" exists which, in the opinion