

**THE PROVOCATION OF
FRANCE. FIFTY YEARS OF
GERMAN AGGRESSION**

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The provocation of France. Fifty years of German aggression by Jean Charlemagne Bracq

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JEAN CHARLEMAGNE BRACQ

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FIFTY YEARS OF GERMAN AGGRESSION

BY

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INTRODUCTION

THE pages that follow merely describe acts and events which have taken place within the range of the author's recollections. He heard discussions as a boy, in France, upon the war of Italian liberation, and saw soldiers start for that campaign in 1859. His father and one of his neighbors were greatly interested in the Prusso-Austrian war against Denmark, which they considered as the deliverance of poor molested Germans in a virtual German country. Later on, in their own way, they discussed the conflict between Prussia and Austria. For one of these men, a Protestant, Prussia was the representative of liberalism, of humanism, of progress; while for the other, a Catholic, Austria was the custodian of European order, of the best conservative traditions in a tottering society, and the great Power most loyal to the Church. The conversations and discussions which the boy heard were, as a rule, inaccurate in substance and almost always in their conclusions, but they created for him an interest in the problems of central Europe that has been lasting. The Franco-Prussian war taught him what to think of the much vaunted liberalism and pacific spirit of the land of Bismarck. Subsequent history has revealed to him what German leaders, not representing ethically the people, could do to harrow the soul of a neighboring nation and insult her Allies by attempting to discredit them. The writer is conscious of the sterling qualities and of the attainments of the enemies of his native land, but it is their unjust, their aggressive

and their provoking course that he has wished to bring out as well as the casuistry with which German writers have justified the duplicity of their leaders. He has used as a guiding thread the editorial opinions of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, which have always been the work of masterly minds such as Michel Chevalier, Charles de Mazade, the Vicomte Georges d'Avenel and Francis Charmes. These *chroniques* are, as a whole, the most reliable and impartial interpretations of contemporary history, during the last half century, with which the author is acquainted, while the principal French books devoted to the most burning international questions first appeared in this review. His recent re-reading of these luminous and honest statements of contentions among various peoples has convinced him that they constitute a collection of facts, bearing upon the question at issue, of the greatest value. He has secured his evidence from varied and reliable sources. Without surrendering his critical independence, he confesses his readiness to accept, as reliable, the statements of the noblest representatives of France, of Lavisse, of Sorel, of Monod, of Taine, of Renan, of Fouillée, while even the more emotional affirmations of E. Caro and of Pasteur seem to him trustworthy. He has consulted the best sources available to him, and among these he cannot pass over in silence *Le Temps*, which, for nearly a third of a century, has proven to him the best instrument of information upon France and Europe. This is not a book of erudition. It is the simple putting together of facts which scarcely anyone denies today, yet which point to an almost constant aggression against France. It does not bring out the acts of chance individuals, but of the rulers and governing classes beyond the Rhine. At the same time, it