

**THE WAR OF THE FUTURE
IN THE
LIGHT OF THE LESSONS OF
THE WORLD WAR**

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The war of the future in the light of the lessons of the World War by Friedrich von Bernhardi & F. A. Holt

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FRIEDRICH VON BERNHARDI & F. A. HOLT

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The War of the Future

In the Light of the Lessons of the World War

By General ^{Friedrich} von Bernhardt

Author of "Germany and the Next War," etc.

Translated by F. A. Holt, O.B.E.

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PREFACE

THE following pages were written either during the late war itself or shortly after it ended. The conclusions which they contain are entirely the product of the war. The immediate purpose of the book was to give to all officers who were not in a position to see the war from a central point a survey of the nature of modern war : to present them with a frame into which they could fit their special knowledge. Further I intended to suggest the principles on which the future development of the Army should be based.

That purpose has now become utterly vain.

A large proportion of our magnificent Corps of Officers lies on the battlefields ; another part has been compelled to give up the splendid profession by wounds or disease ; the rest has been dissolved side by side with the Army and is trying to pick up a precarious livelihood in other walks of life. Thus the number of my readers in that circle can be but small.

But that is not all. There is no longer a German Army, for the few men we are allowed to keep after the Peace Treaty cannot be considered as such. Our colonies are a thing of the past. Our fleet is at

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the bottom of the sea. It would be sheer madness to think of preparing for war now, even if only in theory; for it is utterly impossible for us to make war. It would be a crime to hanker after war now when peace has just been concluded and it is the duty of us all to work for the economic recovery of our people. Moreover, our present Government is doing everything to eliminate war from international intercourse, and there can be no doubt that the success of this attempt will be very welcome so long as the interests and honour of the German nation can thereby be preserved. Whether this ambition will actually succeed is another question. I do not think so unless Germany submits blindly to the will of the hostile states around her, or human nature entirely changes. But no obstacles should be placed in the way of this effort; it should proceed in the most favourable conditions possible, and in these circumstances it would be a mistake to hint at a coming war.

If in spite of all this I am publishing my work and have found a publisher willing to take on the thankless task of printing it for the benefit of the public, I am pursuing a twofold aim. In the first place I shall hope to show how a war—that is a war on modern lines—is utterly unthinkable for Germany, impoverished and broken. Secondly, it must be remembered that the military interest in the world war, which, with its subsequent effects, is undoubtedly ushering in a new period of world history, will very soon revive in all quarters. It is thus our duty to consider the important lessons of

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this great struggle, under the impressions of which we are still labouring, to visualize and grasp them so that coming generations who may have to apply them cannot charge us with irresponsible negligence and carelessness. This book is to meet that theoretical need and proclaim our helplessness. It is, therefore, far from any desire or intention to sharpen the sword of vengeance. Its purpose is only to show that as things are we are no longer physically able to do so; it will teach about the war which we are no longer in a position to make.

For the rest, there will doubtless be many gaps in my work. That is inevitable, because to all intents and purposes I am basing my observations on personal experience, and that must necessarily be limited. I shall be grateful to anyone who feels called on to supplement what I have to say.

Mountain warfare is left undiscussed of set purpose, as I have had no personal experience of it. Someone with greater qualifications must write on that subject. From my own personal experience I can only say here that there are doubtless many points of comparison with trench warfare in France, so that my remarks on this aspect are in many respects applicable to that also.

VON BERNHARDI,
General.

Cunnersdorf,
February, 1920.

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