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Admonition of Wilhelm

AS WE SEE IT—René Viviani—*Harper*

(\$3.50).

A Compendious Account of Germany's Guilt for the War

M. Viviani's book is a direct answer to that puerile and invidious work known as the ex-Kaiser's *War Memoirs*. It is impossible to escape from the logic of M. Viviani's scathing denunciation of the ex-Kaiser's tacit inculpation in the events which preceded the world-wide cataclysm.

The author has written this book from the traditional standpoint of a French nationalist. There is no screen to impartiality. The object is to prove first of all the ex-Kaiser's guilt and then the incrimination of high personages in Germany in the dishonorable plot to force war on the world. M. Viviani not only accomplishes what he sets out to do, but actually damns the Germans from out of their own mouths.

It has been fashionable to excuse the ex-Kaiser—as he excused himself in his *Memoirs*—for being the tool in the hands of ambitious soldiers, statesmen and industrial magnates. Despite this book from the perspicuous pen of M. Viviani, it is possible that the Old Man of Doorn is not quite as bad as he is depicted. Be that as it may, there is no shadow of a single doubt that Wilhelm must shoulder a good part of the heinous responsibility of setting the match to the fagots; which act resulted in that mighty conflagration, of which the embers are still smouldering.

The author has placed in juxtaposition the peace loving efforts of the Entente with the war-like aims of Germany. He pays remarkable tribute to the patience and courage of the Tsar and King Edward VII. While the leaders in the Entente Cordiale were doing all they could to further the cause of peace, the villains of the piece were laying their nefarious plans. He tells of the surreptitious beginnings of the German war policy and leads up by stages to the open manifestations of that dread disease—Franco-phobia. Finally through a maze of diplomatic material M. Viviani, with true legal logic, proves his case for the prosecution.

Some brief notes and excerpts:

Of Bismarck: The author shows that Bismarck exercised a great influence in the early days of Wilhelm's reign. Some of his maxims are given: "Direct parliamentary government is to be avoided at any price, even at the price of a dictatorship." "German unity will not be achieved by speeches nor by decisions of the majority, but by blood and iron." "Where it is a question of Prussia's power, I recognize no law."

Viviani

Of Wilhelm: Rathenau says of him: "He was weakness which could not do without support." His father says: "His general culture is full of gaps and he lacks genuine depths. This lack of maturity and this inexperience in my son, combined with his tendency toward exaggeration, make me feel that it would be dangerous to allow him to concern himself, at present, in foreign affairs." Bismarck remarks: "He is a man who would like to have a birthday every day, or solemn processions, or receptions, or parades, and, in his haughtiness, the rôle of the world's arbiter would be to his liking."

Of July 5, 1914: From the Austrian *Red Book* the author reproduces two diplomatic telegrams which clearly show that the ex-Kaiser was not wholly unconscious of the impending catastrophe since he advised Austria that she should not allow an opportunity, such as presented itself, to slip away. Then, says the author, "the fact remains that war was caused on that fifth day of July in 1914. And that very man, who, after the carnage, after millions of unfortunates have perished, after he hardly dares to look upon the accusing earth for fear of seeing a tomb rise up before his eyes, cries out, a prey to belated remorse or religious terror: 'My God! I did not will this!' (*Memoirs*). Mothers of all countries, you hear what he says: He did not will this! He did not will it on the fifth of July!"

Of Wilhelm's writings: The following are some of the annotations which the ex-Kaiser wrote on various diplomatic despatches. Referring to Sir Edward Grey: "The ignoble clown! Vile dog's excrement! England alone bears the responsibility for war or peace and it is no longer we!" Later on: "What a low cheat! The fellow is insane or an idiot." Of the King of Italy he notes: "The rascal! The King has not yet answered me even!" Later: "So our allies are betraying us also." About Giolitti: "The unbelievable scoundrel!"

The author was Prime Minister and foreign Secretary of the French Republic during that period immediately preceding the war and during the first fateful days of the German advance on the Marne. By profession he is a lawyer; in politics he is an independent socialist. A man renowned for his brilliant rhetoric, vivacious temperament and engaging personality, M. Viviani showed even greater qualities during those first days of the war, when the existence of France was rendered so precarious, by complete subjugation of all other interests to the task of leading his country through her terrible ordeal. He is sometimes called the Lloyd George of France.

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